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In the memory of Late Professor **John Hospers**
(June 1918 -2011) founder member of the
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Silence in Krzysztof Kieslowski's *The Decalogue* : A Cagian Perspective

DEBORAH WEAGEL

We need not fear these silences,
we may love them.
–John Cage

According to the Old Testament, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God and then presented them to the Israelites. These basic laws of life have been adapted into numerous cultures and continue to inspire artists all over the globe. Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Kieslowski, for example, created a cycle of ten films entitled The Decalogue (1988), in which he explored various aspects of these ancient laws. Working in conjunction with co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz and composer Zbigniew Preisner, Kieslowski completed a monumental work in which he presented a unique version of the Ten Commandments. His rendition incorporated a sensitive and skilled synthesis of music, sounds and silence presented in a fragmented and sparse manner that can be allied in some ways with the aesthetic of American composer John Cage (1912-1992). In this essay, I suggest that the film cycle can be analyzed from a Cagian point of view in which sounds and silence play a salient and musical role.

John Cage is famous for his appreciation of silence, and he understood that it required sound in order to exist. In his "Lecture on Something," he explained, "This is a talk about something and naturally also a talk about nothing. About how something and nothing are not opposed to each other but need each other to keep on going" (Silence 129). In the written version of the lecture, he included spaces in the text as well as some blank pages, emphasizing the reliance of something on nothing. He was also cognizant of the fact that genuine silence does not truly exist. He had the opportunity to visit an anechoic chamber at Harvard University, which is a room that is made with insulation and materials that will absorb sound and provide complete silence. After spending time in the room, he told the engineer that he heard both a high and a low sound. The engineer explained, "The high one was your nervous system in operation. The low one was your blood in circulation" (qtd. in Gann 162).

Although he realized it was not possible to experience true silence, he observed that people often ignore the sounds of everyday life, which become a type of silence. Christopher Shultis pointed out that for Cage, "[t]here were only intended and unintended sounds" (92), and the unintended sounds, the sounds that became part of the background of daily living, frequently tended to be ignored. One of the composer's contributions to music and to contemporary perception of sound was to bring unintended sounds from the background and situate them in the foreground, thereby providing them with a much higher profile. He even suggested that carefully listening to them could be considered a musical experience.[1]

In regard to silence, Cage is remembered in particular for his musical composition 4'33" (Four Minutes Thirty-Three Seconds). In this mid-twentieth century piece, any number of musicians may perform any particular type of instruments. The performance, however, does not involve the literal playing of the instruments; the musicians simply listen with the audience to the sounds around them. Thus, a cough, the rustling of a program, the hum of an air conditioning system, or traffic outside on the streets become the music. For the duration of the piece, everyone listens carefully to the 'music' of everyday life.[2] In his book No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33", Kyle Gann explains that the piece had both its critics and supporters, but that "[f]or many, it was a kind of artistic prayer, a bit of Zen performance theater that opened the ears and allowed one to hear the world anew" (11). He wrote that Cage was involved in the "act of framing, of enclosing environmental and unintended sounds in a moment of attention," and that the composer believed that "all sounds" were "music."[3] 4'33" is frequently referred to as his 'silent' piece, because of the absence of 'music,' or instrumental/vocal expression.[4]

In The Decalogue, Kieslowski also situates miscellaneous sounds and silence in the foreground. With the sparseness of words and in conjunction with Preisner's fragmented music, various noises and silences become salient. In his book, The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Joseph G. Kickasola writes, "There is a certain deadness that permeates the entire Decalogue" (174). Yet the 'deadness' or 'silence' throughout the film series is not truly silent; it lacks consistent dialogue but includes various sounds such as wind blowing, dogs barking, glass breaking, a telephone ringing, and sirens blaring. These sounds, which are carefully integrated with Preisner's music, can be viewed as part of the musical experience.

The first episode deals with the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."[5] The false god in this case is science, which is highly esteemed by the father/scientist Krzysztof. In fact, it is his trust in the scientific method that ultimately leads to the death of his precocious son, when he allows the boy to skate on ice that he has deemed safe using scientific calculations on a computer (and poking the ice with a stick). In this case, the substitute is the computer and the father's general reliance on science and reason. When the ice breaks and his son drowns, the father realizes that his idol, science, has failed him. Kickasola explains that "the event is not the result of a scientific factor overlooked by the computer, but an utter failure on its part" (169).

This film opens with the sound of the wind blowing by a lake. A predominance of string instruments is heard, and a melodic line performed on a recorder emerges and repeats a three-note motive which is haunting and intense. Although one hears sounds and music, there is a sense of silence until the first words of dialogue are spoken between the scientist and his son.[6] Noises such as birds flying and cooing, water

splashing from a faucet, the rhythmic typing on a computer, walking/sliding/running on ice, the telephone or doorbell ringing, a newspaper rustling, bells tolling, chess pieces sliding, a door squeaking, running/walking on stairs or the ground, and the sirens of emergency vehicles blaring can be heard throughout the episode. The alarming scream of a woman is both vocal and musical. Strings and other instruments are heard at various times throughout the film, particularly to build suspense and climactic tension as rescuers search for a body immersed in the lake. The music seems to take on a somber, tragic tone as the young boy Pavel is drawn from the water. The film concludes with an intense instrumental solo on the recorder.

Although there is a certain 'deadness' or sense of silence in this first episode, and throughout the film series, there is still sound, including music and these other noises. Interestingly, even early 'silent' films included some type of sound. In Thinking About Film: A Critical Perspective, Dean Duncan wrote: "Silent movies were almost never silent. They were accompanied by pianists or organists, small ensembles or large orchestras, all of which added to the presentational, stylized nature of that period's cinema experience" (42).[7] The hovering silence in the first film of The Decalogue tends to be more from the lack of initial dialogue than from the music and other sounds heard. In fact, Cage would likely suggest that the sounds of everyday life heard in the episode can be viewed as music. In an interview with Joan Retallack, he explained that "music takes place wherever we are and is expressed by the sounds that we hear and call simply ambient sound; or, we call them silence!" (190). He would view such sounds as an integral part of the musical expression of the film.

The second episode explores the commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Kickasola suggests that it deals with the "sanctity of speech" and that "one's word in human life" (164) carries much weight. Dorota, the main character who is a musician, is pregnant with her lover's child while her husband is in the hospital suffering with cancer. She pleads with the doctor, who is also her neighbor and lives in an apartment on a higher floor higher (suggesting a God-like figure), to proclaim whether her husband will live or die. If he is to die, she will give birth to the baby, and if he is to live, she will abort the baby.

In this film the music is quite sparse. Therefore, extraneous sounds, such as the raking of grass and leaves, chirping of a bird, ringing of the door and telephone, splashing or dripping of water, barking of dogs, opening and closing of a door, beeping of the answering machine, sputtering and humming of a car, breaking of glass, and heavy breathing play an important 'musical' role. As with the first episode, there is a strong sense of silence in the beginning of the film, which includes miscellaneous sounds and lacks initial dialogue.[8] Preisner's orchestral music, including the piano, is heard during some of the more intense moments, such as when the pregnant Dorota announces to her lover that she is having an abortion and when her husband appears to have conquered his illness. Additional music is also included among some of the tensions and difficulties the woman faces as a result of her infidelity and in response to her husband's illness. In the end, however, Dorota leaves her lover, keeps the baby, and her

husband recovers. The words of all the participants, but most profoundly the doctor, hold great weight in this film. The doctor's determination to remain silent for a long time, and not pronounce a definitive outcome regarding the husband's illness until towards the end of the film, plays a strong role in preserving the life of Dorota's unborn child.

The various sounds in this episode (and throughout the film cycle) are actually more controlled and intentional than many viewers may realize. Many sounds in filmmaking are addressed, to a large degree, in the post-production phase of creating a movie. Once the footage has been shot, undesirable noises that were picked up during production, particularly those filmed at an outdoor location, are eliminated. Then other sounds that need to be emphasized are often recreated in the studio and incorporated into the film as needed. Jack Donovan Foley (1891-1967), a sound editor at Universal Studios, was an expert at creating a wide variety of sound effects in the studio to enhance the sounds heard in a film. His name is now associated with this art, and the process has become an important part of the post-production process.[9] The fact that sound is manipulated in this manner is significant and underscores the role of the filmmaking team in highlighting certain noises, particularly those found in daily living, such as ice cracking, wind howling, or keys jingling. These sounds, which are somewhat manipulated, are then interspersed with the music, and in this particular film cycle, they form a complex musical tapestry. Although Cage found music in sounds that occurred naturally, as a byproduct of everyday life, these more manipulated studio sounds that are made to seem part of daily living, can also be considered music.

The action of the third film, which examines the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," takes place during Christmas Eve. In this episode, Janusz plans to celebrate the holiday with his wife and family, but is distracted by Ewa, a former lover. She convinces him to help her find her boyfriend, and this effort takes all night. She later confesses that this search was really an excuse to spend time with Janusz, because she believed his attention could keep her from committing suicide. Kickasola suggests that time is significant in this episode, and the way we choose to spend our time during holidays, day and night, etc., carries meaning (164). One could also consider the family as holy or sacred, especially during a religious holiday, and that choosing to spend time away from the family is similar to breaking the Sabbath. The issue becomes complex, however, because Janusz may have helped to save someone's life with his choice, which is, in the long run, an act of goodness.

The episode opens with a series of different musical passages. First, an inebriated man sings on the street. Then a formal choir performs Christmas songs, followed by an informal group singing a cappella (and somewhat out of tune) in a home. Orchestral music can be heard, after which a congregation sings at a midnight mass, accompanied by an organ. This is followed by more orchestral music and then a long break from actual music. Eventually more orchestral music is heard, some young children carolers sing a short Christmas song at a door, and the film concludes with the sounds of music. As is the case in the other episodes, miscellaneous noises can also be viewed as 'music,' such as the telephone buzzing, people walking/running, paper crumpling, cars racing/idling/humming, sirens blaring, doors opening and shutting, and bells tolling.[10]

The importance of sound in this film and throughout The Decalogue is underscored by the fact that a person is assigned to deal with sound for each episode. Although Kieslowski directs and Preisner composes the music for the entire film cycle, a variety of different people deal specifically with sound. For example, Malgorzata Jaworska is in charge of sound for episodes I, II, IV, and V; Nikodem Wolk-Laniewski handles it for episodes III, VI, VII, IX, and X; and Wieslawa Dembinska deals with it for episode VIII. The editor, Ewa Smal, who worked on all the films, also played in role in the effective way in which silence, sound, and music are presented in this cycle.

The fourth episode deals with the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother." In this film, a young woman named Anka finds a sealed letter written by her deceased mother. In it she explains to her daughter that Michal, the only father she has known, is not her biological father. This episode explores complicated relationships between a parent and child, particularly those between those of the opposite sex. Kickasola explains that "the definition of 'father' and 'mother' and the role of intentionality in the definition of human relationships are key themes in this film" (193). He suggests that, similar to the other episodes, "this story features the commandment, not as a didactic point or lesson, but as ground for the articulation of modern ethical complexities." In the end, Michal, despite temptation to do otherwise, chooses to retain the relationship of father and daughter. Anka is also willing to accept him as her father, whether or not there is a genuine biological connection.

Throughout this film, there is a similar synthesis of music, silence, and sounds that exists in all the episodes. In the beginning, an orchestra briefly plays a series of long, held-out notes separated by rests or pauses. One of the salient aspects of the music is the inclusion of bass notes that act as an ostinato. This ostinato-type figure helps to unify the film structurally in that it recurs at various places throughout the work, including at the conclusion. Silence is also significant because in some ways it includes the music and other sounds. As in the other films, various noises can be affiliated with Preisner's music, including the pouring of water, ringing of the telephone and doorbell, muttering of announcements at the airport, a kiss, droning of airplanes, a slap on the face, crashing of glass, bustling of traffic on the streets, opening and closing of doors, echoing of footsteps, playing of children, and the crackling of a burning letter.[11]

Preisner gained international fame for his success in composing the music for this film cycle. He studied art history at Jagiellonian University and taught himself music. He would buy a record, study the music, deconstruct it, and then rewrite parts of it to improve the original. Eventually he became the composer of film scores. Associating his work with "romanticism" ("The Music of Zbigniew Preisner"), Preisner is more drawn to music that is highly melodic than to other styles that are not. He refers to his film scores as "creations" because they do not easily fit into a particular category. His style tends to be experimental in its own way, with its sparseness, fragmentation, repetition, haunting harmonies, and melodic exploration.[12] Integrated with silence and sound in the film cycle, it can be examined from a Cagian point of view.

The fifth episode involves the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." It focuses on a young man, Jacek, who needlessly takes the life of a cab driver. The youth is found guilty for his crime and hung. Kickasola explains that this film concentrates on the theme of "murder and punishment" (164), and the question of capital punishment comes to the forefront. Is it ethical to kill a criminal as punishment for murder? In the book Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Annette Insdorf points out that during the time the film cycle was made, Poland was actively practicing capital punishment. She suggests, "Even if the Biblical injunction of 'an eye for an eye' seems to justify the death of Jacek, the graphic authenticity of the execution is as difficult to watch as the first killing" (90). Kickasola writes of the "deathly stillness" (208) one finds at the end of the film. He finds irony in the fact that a physician, a lawyer, and a priest are present at the hanging, and these professions that are "dedicated to healing, justice, and restoration" tend to be "oddly out of place."

In this fifth film, there are brief musical fragments that are quite diverse. Music which is tonal and harmonious is heard in parts of the film, but there are also musical passages that are tense, ominous, and somewhat dissonant. One also finds curious juxtapositions, such as cheerful children's music on the radio after the murder of the taxi driver, which is a serious, somber offense. Some sounds in the film that can be affiliated with music include the murmuring of voices; opening, closing, and/or squeaking of a door; tolling/whistling/ringing of bells; playing/talking of children; humming/screeching of trucks, cars, and trains; footsteps on the floor, pavement, or stairs; and honking of a horn (particularly during the murder).[13]

According to a Cagian perspective, as suggested earlier, miscellaneous sounds can be framed, as in the silent piece 4'33". In this case, a musician or conductor determines how long the audience will listen to the noises in the environment around them. Cage believed, however, that it is also possible to simply be aware of and enjoy such sounds throughout the day, and in this sense 4'33" does not require a formal performance. In 1982 he explained to William Duckworth that he used the piece constantly. He said, "No day goes by without my making use of that piece in my life and in my work. I listen to it every day. . . I don't sit down to do it; I turn my attention to it. I realize that it's going on continuously" (qtd. in Gann 186). Kyle Gann suggests, "Ultimately, we are left with the conundrum that 4'33" has expanded into an infinite river of a piece into which any of us can dip at any time we please" (187). He explains further, "Someone can frame it, in performance or on recording, to draw attention to it. But for those who have an affinity for Cage's appreciation for the physicality of sound, even that is no longer necessary." In regard to The Decalogue, there are sounds that are, for the most part, intentional, recorded, and 'framed.' They are skillfully highlighted, which is evidence of Kieslowski's awareness of daily sound, and they reflect a Cagian appreciation for miscellaneous noise. Integrated with Preisner's music, they become part of the musical tapestry of the film cycle.

The sixth episode addresses the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." In this film, Tomek, a young man who works in the post office, becomes obsessed with

Magda, a woman who lives in an apartment building opposite his. He spies on her looking through a telescope. The two finally meet and their eventual date concludes in extreme embarrassment for Tomek. He becomes so distraught with his experience with Magda that he becomes disenchanted with the concept of love and attempts to commit suicide. Eventually Magda realizes she has developed deeper feelings for Tomek, but by this time he seems to have lost interest in her. Kickasola suggests that the film explores the "nature and relation of love and passion" (164). A variety of issues are explored in addition to the main focus of fornication, adultery, love, lust, and passion, such as lying, deception, and killing (oneself).

This film opens with glass shattering on the ground followed by suspenseful, intense music. Throughout the episode one finds a variety of musical textures and instruments. For example, in some passages Preisner emphasizes the repetition of two notes ascending or descending. In other parts of the film Preisner incorporates a fuller sound with rich harmony often performed by multiple instruments. Silence is significant in this episode, as are other extraneous noises which can be considered part of the musical fabric, such as a door opening/closing/squeaking, a clock ticking or ringing, water splashing, a car screeching, footsteps, cars and traffic, dogs barking, and birds singing/chirping.[14]

The seventh episode presents the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." In the film, the young girl Ania lives with Ewa and is told that Majka is her sister. However, Majka is really her mother and wants Ania to know the truth. She 'steals' Ania and leaves her parents so that she can enjoy a mother/daughter relationship with her child. Kickasola points out that this particular film explores the concept of "[p]ossession as human need and temptation" (164). The desire for possession includes not only material items, such as homes, furniture, vehicles, clothes, etc., but also people and relationships. In this episode, the focus is on ownership of human beings and on relationships. There are, in a sense, multiple 'thefts' in the story. After Majka 'kidnaps' her own daughter, she says to Ewa, "You stole my daughter." Insdorf writes that Ewa "was perhaps overly eager to be Ania's mother because she could not have more children—'robbed' of the chance to procreate further" (106).

In this film, the music is sparse but extremely effective. One of the most salient aspects of the music is the repetition of three descending notes which function as a type of ostinato. These three notes can be associated with the three generations involved in the film: grandmother, mother, and granddaughter / old, younger, youngest / high note, lower note, lowest note. Preisner skillfully intertwines the repetition of the three notes and a melodic line to create music that is haunting, eerie, mystical, and intense. A stark contrast is provided with the music at a children's puppet show, which is upbeat, light, and playful. An additional 'musical' element is the crying/wailing of a young girl in various parts of the film, including the beginning. The human voice, in this case, is like a wind instrument that expresses a certain agony, fear, and insecurity.

In the screenplay, the emphasis on silence, sound, and a children's scream is apparent. The directions at the beginning of the episode are as follows:

Night. Our apartment block is asleep. Apart for the distant clattering of trams, the wind and the windows rattling in the wind, all is quiet. This all-enveloping silence is pierced by the sharp-pitched, dramatic scream of a young child. A light immediately appears in one of the windows. The screaming continues. (187)

Other noises are also intentional, as indicated in the instructions in the screenplay, such as the "pure and high pitched" (188) sound of a small whistle, a door that "bangs shut" (192), a telephone that rings and "shatters the nocturnal silence" (199), and the whistle from "an approaching train" that "can be heard from a distance" (212). These sounds, interspersed with Preisner's music, become part of the musical qualities in the film.[15]

The eighth episode deals with the commandment, "That shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." Zofia, a professor of ethics at the University of Warsaw, meets Elzbieta, a Jewish scholar from New York who listens to her lecture on ethics. As the story unfolds, we learn that when Elzbieta was younger and living in Poland, Zofia would not help to hide her during the Nazi Occupation. In the end, both women find some sort of closure when Elzbieta learns why Zofia refused assistance at that critical time in her life. Kickasola suggests that the film analyzes "[t]he difficulties of truth amid desperate evil" (164). He writes, "This remarkable film stands as the most philosophically direct of the ten films and, in my opinion, ranks among the greatest" (225). It also delves into the complexities of survival, guilt, repentance, compassion, forgiveness, and resolution.

In this film, the music is also sparse, but is supplemented by other sounds which can be considered musical. As the film begins, one hears a melodious instrumental solo that develops into a duet with two string instruments. This particular musical passage is repeated in various parts of the film, including the conclusion. In the very suspenseful passage of the film, plucked strings repeat notes which add to the mystery and tension of the scene. Additional bowed strings join in, as do other instruments, to create a rich contrast to the starkness of the previous music and to further intensify the building of the climax. Additional 'musical' sounds in the piece include footsteps, birds singing outside, the barking of a dog, the sputtering of a car, the ringing of various types of bells, the hum of traffic in a large tunnel, and knocking at the door.[16]

Some of the sounds are percussive in nature. In "An Autobiographical Statement," Cage wrote that "percussion is completely open. It is not even open-ended. It has no end." He explained that it is different from other sections of an orchestra, such as the strings, the winds, and the brass in that it occurs before and after the concert as well. He suggested that "percussion is exemplified by the very next sound you actually hear wherever you are, in or out of doors." In this sense, many types of sounds in daily life are both percussive and musical in nature. This could include the clanging of pots and pans in a kitchen or the rhythmic knocking at a door, the types of sounds we often find highlighted in The Decalogue. Throughout the episode, even with the music and percussive sounds, there is a pervading sense of silence.

The ninth film explores the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." In this case, a surgeon named Roman covets his own attractive wife.

When he learns of his impotence, he encourages her to get a lover. Once he gives her permission to do this, he becomes obsessed with her whereabouts and begins to spy on her. When he discovers she is seeing a young physics student, he becomes jealous, upset, and attempts to take his own life. Kickasola suggests that the ideal in the film involves "[t]he sanctity of commitment" (164). Realizing her error, his wife Hanka terminates the relationship with the student and attempts to repair her own troubled marriage. In discussing The Decalogue Kieslowski explained, "I believe the life of every person is worthy of scrutiny, containing its own secrets and dramas" ("An Introduction to The Decalogue"). He wanted to highlight particular individual situations that were "credible" and "recognizable." In this and the other films in the cycle, he accomplished this objective, by presenting "extreme, extraordinary situations" for the characters, "ones in which they would face difficult choices and make decisions which could not be taken lightly."

The ninth episode begins with silence. Eventually a short, haunting musical motive sounds with the general rhythm of short-short-long. The motive is introduced with three notes, but varies and sometimes has four or more notes. The melodic contour of the notes also varies, frequently following the pattern of pitches of same-same-higher or same-same-lower. In addition, the vocal music of a fictitious Dutch composer, Van den Budenmayer, is presented via a fictitious professional recording as well as through the brief a cappella rendition of Roman and a female patient. This music sounds again at the conclusion of the film, intertwined with the familiar three-note motive. Silence plays a significant role, as do other aural sounds that can be viewed as 'musical,' such as the opening/shutting/locking of a door, screeching/humming of a car, falling of rain, chirping of birds, traffic on the streets, tolling of a bell, ringing of the doorbell, footsteps, dialing and ringing of the telephone, barking of a dog, repetitive honking of the horn of the car, the television and its noises, pouring of milk, bells from horses, turning of the wheel of a bicycle, etc. The sound of a young girl playing and singing out-of-doors also adds to the musical texture of the work.[17]

John Cage loved sounds and noise, and chose to make them a part of his life rather than shut them out as some people might do. In an interview with Stephen Montague which was conducted at Cage's loft in New York, the composer said, "But the thing about this place that is musical is the street noise from Sixth Avenue . . . . I love it!" (208). Montague noted that Cage did not have double glass on his windows and asked, "Is that because you've always been fascinated with sound, noise, and so forth?" Cage responded:

> I wouldn't dream of getting double glass because I love all sounds. The traffic never stops, night and day. Every now and then a horn, siren, screeching brakes, extremely interesting and always unpredictable. At first I thought I couldn't sleep through it. Then I found a way transposing the sounds into images so that they entered into my dreams without waking me up. (209)

Kieslowski seems to have a similar respect for sounds in his film cycle. There is no double glass to keep out the noise of daily life; rather, such sounds are brought to the foreground and become skillfully intertwined with the music and silence.

The last film addresses the commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." In this film two brothers inherit their father's prized stamp collection. As they learn the value of the stamps, they go to various measures to safeguard it. However, in an effort to obtain the greatest monetary return for it, they become swindled and lose it all. Kickasola suggests that this episode examines "[g]reed and relationships" (164). He points out that although the brothers "have coveted, desired, been selfish, possessive, and suspicious of others" (241), in the end they come to love one another even more. He suggests that this is a pervading theme, not only in this episode, but throughout the entire film cycle. He explains that "giving oneself away to a loved one marks the beginnings of morality and its teleology."

The music of a rock band opens this film with the persistent, dominant beat of drums, amplified instruments, and a male vocalist. This rock music as well as other intense and suspenseful music, such as the subtle roll of a drum, are interspersed at strategic moments during the film. As in many of the other episodes, silence is significant and is skillfully integrated with the music, voices, and other noises. Some of the sounds in the film which could be viewed as 'music,' include keys tinkling against each other; the piercing sound of an alarm; rustling of papers; ringing of the doorbell; steps on stairs; humming of cars, trucks, and traffic; barking of dogs; the incessant sound of birds chirping outside; and the rumbling of voices in a restaurant. The film concludes with the instrumental and vocal music of the rock band.[18]

Notes and References

1 John Cage spoke about the sounds of silence in New York in 1991. See "John Cage about Silence" on YouTube.

2 For a performance of Cage's *4'33"* by pianist David Tudor, see "John Cage - 4'33" by David Tudor." For an orchestral performance on the same work conducted by Lawrence Foster, see "John Cage 4'33" (BBC)."

3 For more information on the background, reception, and influence of *4'33"* and on its various versions, see Gann's book *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's* 4'33".

4 For a discussion on Cage's emphasis on silence in his work, see my book *Words and Music: Camus, Beckett, Cage, Gould.*

5 The segmentation of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3-17 varies according to interpretation. I am following the Roman Catholic enumeration as provided in the screenplay, translated into English by Phil Cavendish and Susannah Bluh. This same model occurs in Facets' 2003 DVD version of the film cycle, as well as in Joseph G. Kickasola's outline in his book *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski* (164). However, Kieslowski was not interested in a strict correlation of one particular commandment to one particular episode. He explained, "Some of my actors who were religious didn't want to act in the 'Decalogue' unless I told them which commandment it was about. . . But this is really not important. One can exchange the . . . sixth with the ninth, the fourth with the seventh" (qtd. in Insdorf 71).

6 To view the opening of the film with its permeating silence, see "Dekalog I - Krzysztof

Kieslowski, part 01/06" on YouTube.

7 In his autobiographical novel, *Le premier homme [The First Man]*, which was published thirty-five years after his death, Albert Camus describes the music that accompanied silent films shown in a theater in Algeria. During that epoch, it was common to see several different types of films, all 'silent,' as part of the entire day's experience. First, there was a newsreel, followed by a short comedy. Then viewers could see the main feature, and finally a serial, which would usually be continued the following week. In Camus' novel, an older woman wearing fingerless gloves played the piano as viewers watched the various films. He writes of accompaniment of the newsreel:

Le commentaire musical des actualités, en particulier, l'obligeait à changer de mélodie selon le caractère de l'evénement projeté. Elle passait ainsi sans transition d'un gai quadrille destiné à accompagner la présentation des modes de printemps à la marche funèbre de Chopin à l'occasion d'une inondation en Chine ou des funérailles d'un personnage important dans la vie nationale ou international. (92)

Providing musical commentary to the news, in particular, required her to change melodies according to the nature of the events being shown on the screen. She would go without transition from a lively quadrille accompanying the spring fashion shows to Chopin's Funeral March for a flood in China or the funeral of a personage important on the national or international scene. (95)

Thus the audible musical accompaniment added significantly to the viewing experience of these 'silent' films.

8 See, for example, "Dekalog II - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

9 In the summer of 2011, I visited Sony Picture Studios in the Los Angeles area in California and went to a Foley-studio. I saw how many of the sounds we hear in movies are created in a studio, sometimes using objects other than the ones we hear in the actual film.

10 Some of the music and sounds can be heard at "Dekalog III - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

11 See, for example, "Dekalog IV - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube for the inclusion of silence, sounds, and music in this episode.

12 See Zbigniew Preisner, *Dekalog: Original Film Soundtrack*. To hear some of his other music, see the CD *Preisner's Music.*

13 See "Dekalog V - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

14 To hear some of these sounds and silence, see "Dekalog VI - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

15 See, for example, "Dekalog VII - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

16 See "Dekalog VIII - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

17 To hear some of these sounds, see "Dekalog IX - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/06" on YouTube.

18 To hear the rock group and some other sounds, see "Dekalog X - Krzysztof Kieslowski part 01/07" on YouTube.

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French Feminism

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A new critical concern?

We would like here to present some features of a critical literary awareness that began to be manifest amongst French writers in the post war period. This particularly relates to the coming of age amongst women, and their increasingly critical perspective on prevalent cultural attitudes. The application here applies not only to the contemporary scene, but also to features of society over the whole course of human history. The writers of this sort of new wave treat of how women write in actuality, but also of how they might write, potentially. Relationships would be transformed, and so would the equilibrium between males and females. A feature of this wave is that the authors seek to involve the total personality, body and mind together. It involves specifically the position of gender in creativity. What part do women play here, driven by their specific situation and consciousness, and what role might they assume, fulfilling a potential that is undoubtedly there? One of the features of the contemporary scene in French letters is the growing prominence of women writers who dwell on the quintessential character of writing by women, composing their own work through their own specific experience, aspirations and modulations. The pinpointing of this specificity involves an investigation into the nature of feminine language, its source in the social status of the female, and the historical relationship of the two sexes, and the political alignment within the social and historical context. Inevitably, all this has changed perceptibly and even dramatically over the last fifty years or so. And in the course of this time frame, the roles have shifted a great deal in the Western world. Women writers in France have particularly been a driving force in probing the usages and seeking a description of the situation as it currently pertains, as well as whatever lies behind those usages, historically and unconsciously. There is also inevitably a critical thrust behind the analysis , as well as a programme. This however is extremely complex, and takes on divergent forms, as the analysis varies so markedly as between tone author and another, even within the radical feminist camp itself.

Simone de Beauvoir

The iconic figure from whose work French feminism in the post-war era derives is the writer philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). It was she who articulated in greatest detail and most accurately the anger of the modern woman in the face of long standing historical positioning of the respective roles of the two sexes. That, in her view, men were regarded and indeed acted as the master sex is indicated by the very title of her major work, *Le deuxième sexe*.[1] There is not an equal balance and mutually agreed distribution of functions, but a kind of master/slave relationship.

In the first volume, she sets out her objective as the correction of misapprehensions in relation to the definition of the subject, which, put in its boldest form, can be summed up as putting the question: what is a woman? Traditionally, woman is seen merely in relation to man, i.e. a person of male gender, the negative of man in this sense. On the other hand, man is defined as the generality of human, and is not seen necessarily in terms of a specified gender. Man is the norm; woman is the other.[2] She spells this out from the outset at the beginning of the second volume of her major work: 'La destinée que la société propose traditionellement à la femme c'est le mariage.'[3] She is aware of the considerable changes in the status of the married woman over the previous decades in Western societies. However, Only in the 18th.century, she says, did some notable male thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill and Diderot, argue for the full humanity of women. But these were exceptional cases. What she would like to investigate here is how the present situation has been reached.. For example, the word "female" itself is a pejorative term, confining to prefixed limits, and submitting women to a subservient role, not allowing them as independent individuals, to glorify in their sexuality. And the institution of marriage is still viewed quite differently by the two sexes. For the woman, marriage is the central event of her life, beyond career and material achievement, whereas for the man, this is certainly not the case. The woman is still man dependent. De Beauvoir asserts this despite her awareness of variant historical and geographical circumstances. Although she accepts that the two sexes are interdependent, they are unevenly balanced in terms of influence and power. The woman is generally the passive object, reliant on the good graces of the male subject and the pressures of a male led society. It is she who is given to the man. She, for example, is not as free as he is to take a lover. She can only acquire a modicum of such free action by being married: '…si elle voulait prendre un amant, il fallait d'abord qu'elle se mariât.' (17) The unmarried woman is seen as incomplete, seeking the final touch of completion at the hands of a male.

What de Beauvoir seeks in reparation of an ongoing and difficult imbalance is mutuality, leading to genuine equality. She quotes Marx in his search for a model of true fraternity for the whole of society in an ideal relationship between man and woman. She would search for liberty through the resolution of natural differences, which would lead to what she understands as Marxian fraternity.: 'C'est au sein du monde donné qu'il appertient à l'homme de faire triompher la règne de la liberté; pour remporter cette suprême victoire il est entre autres nécessaire que par-delà leurs differenciations naturelles, hommes et femmes affirment sans equivoque leur fraternité.' (504). It is with this hope based on a reorientation of gender positioning that de Beauvoir closes this massive opus. The whole book is in effect a portrait of a world in which the population is divided into two sexes of approximately equal number, who are approximately level in ability, talent and aspiration, who are nevertheless grossly disparate in achievement, influence and control. This to the extent that the name of the one sex, man (l'homme) stands in for humanity altogether. Clearly, this is unjust, and must be corrected. If things were to turn out this way, with the achievement of the aspiration as envisaged, there could come about a world with a built in framework of genuine liberty and fraternity.

The later work

This is exemplified in the radical work, theoretical and fictional of such as Hélène Cixous (1937-), In her extended essay, *Le Troisième Corps*[4], for example, she describes a situation of the woman, entwined with the other;. Her knowledge such as it is, is the knowledge of terror, as well as the experience of eternity. In her novel, *Souffles*[5],.the narrator is totally involved with her lover, and can tolerate no-one other than him: '…il n'y a pas d'autre pénis que ton pénis ce qui ne l'empêche pas tandis que je le tête, d'étinceler dans mon con…' (16) This sensation would continue '…au moment où je le vois, brandi au dessus de moi, prêt a s'abattre sur ma poitrine.' Yearns for something beyond the physical, but '…à ses sources…je veux rompre les vrais liens…'(69) She moves from first to third person: '…sa main vient se poser sur ma fesse; il met sa main sur ma fesse, allonge le bras pour m'étreindre les flancs, à ma stupefaction' (72) As we see, the language is totally uninhibited; the female rejoices in her own, separate and legitimated experience of sexuality.Love is her life, the source of her actual breathing capacity: 'C'est là que je le retrouve, l'amour mon souffle, qui naturellement m'envelope et me rythme.' (104) My flower opens out. This can also exist between women: 'Entre deux rives d'une femme et entre d'une même nature, et entre deux femmes d'un même amour…' (211) To whom does one reveal the secret; not to me, but to love (215). There is a longing for what is always evasive. Her final sentence: '…pour aller voir encore plus loin plus près…' (223).

She combines the genres of fiction and analysis of feeling in the novel, *La fiancée juive de la tentation*.[6] Paris, 1995. which is a speech addressed to love in both first and third person. The female speaker is besotted with her male addressee: 'la jouissance de ma jouissance étrangère. On ne peut pas rêver plus pénétrant.' (60). She feels that she has been "blinded" and "deafened" by her obsession. (11). The language in which she expresses her feelings is explosive: '…mon doux ami, tel que tu fais jadis dans nos premières amours, je reconnus tes lèvres avides de jeune homme et moi aussi j'avais mes lèvres farouches…' (11). She also reduces herself to being his plaything and subject, totally at his disposal, like a mouse to a cat: Je suis ta souris, chat divin.' (15) l But then they conduct separate marriages: ' Back to the third person account:'…ils ne se mariaient pas simultanement, on allait se marier, séparement, elle seule avec lui sur elle…'(156) But she also seeks freedom, presumably from the coils of passion. The book concludes with the rediscovery, on the part of the "protagonist", with her mother, who, it seems, has come back to her after a prolonged absence: 'Alors elle m'est revenue. Un beau matin que je n'en y…pas, parce que j'avais fait tant patience et allégeance, parce que je ne comptais plus les chances ni les souffrances, soudain elle s'est trouvée là, où je ne la cherchais pas. Dans le classeur sur l'etagère, qu'elle n'avait pas quitté, elle était lâ. J'ai reçu mon visa pour la deuxième fois.'

The book, *Portrait du soleil*.[7]. was published twice over a period of 26 years, also gives us the feeling procedure of the protagonist, conveying a blind love followed by a more sober assessment in objective terms: '…nous ne sommes plus aveugles, nous sommes les inconnus, les plus heureux de l'univers, entre Loi et Nécessité.'(82) But there is a contradiction to the earlier assessment of sobriety: 'Nous avons été un

instant foudroyés, les plus perdus des inconnus.' (83) He indeed is the sun. But the total enslavment to the sun who is her beloved, also confirms her being as a woman: '…je suis une femme parce que j'ai grand désir de toi.' (176) She merges the identities of sun and her man: 'Lui. Le soleil.' (181)

Luce Irigaray (1932-), in her ecstatic work, *Être deux*.[8] also finds the individuality of her protagonist in the perception of the loved one as being separate and therefore, on a deep level, unknowable: 'N'est-ce parce que je sais que tu es?' (23) This is also an address, I to Thou. She asks whether it is not the fact of being the unknown that allows them to be two, separate, although love is '…semblable à une flamme, à une écume, monte alors vers le Seigneur la consummation de soi.' (27) They are together but separate: 'Là où nous sommes constraints à la fusion, découvrir l'écart.' (32)

Irigaray works towards a theory of 'écriture feminine', which would offset what she sees as the phallocentrism of history, which has placed the male at the center as a universal referent. This would restore the balance, and serve as a welcome corrective, also reflecting reality..

In *J'aime à toi*[9]. Grasset. Paris, 1992. she enters the debate around sexual differentiation, so close to her heart. The discussion was conducted under the title: 'L'Europe des nouveaux droits' in Boulogne, 30 May 1989. The title of her book here itself indicates the space perceived between 'me' and 'you', between the man and the woman, ' There is an insertion of a preposition, and she says '…je ne connaîtrai jamais de manière absolue.' What the author describes as 'la difference sexuelle', is a given. Women and men are different, separate; they have different needs, and inhabit different spaces. So both must be considered separately. The objective to be taken up explicitly is the place that love occupies within this framework, of necessity taking account of the space separating the pair.Hegel, in his great work, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, cap. vi; argues that the basic situation that we find is that there is a lack of ethical relationship between the sexes, that within the "work" of love, the couple are in opposition, and this generally tends to favour the male:'le désir sexué, masculin, doit devenir désir pour soi, en tant qu'homme, et pour l'autre; la femme.' (55) To be universal the male must also become a man: 'Mais appartenir à un genre, représente un universel qui existe avant moi. Je dois l'accomplir dans mon destin particulier.' (72) Men are restricted by a patriarchal mythology, as though they have their origin in in gender only, the male. He must become a man. On the other hand, women are aware that they derive from two sexes. (73)

All descriptions of civilization are adapted to the masculine subject. But, we hold, argues the author, there is a need of both. Now what is needed is not the typically masculine notion of mastery (maîtrise) over the natural world, but spiritual harmony with it. (80) It is within the power of woman to find the path of mediation between the sexes, respectful of the difference between them. The most universal quest should be for the "I" to become "we".

Women have to discover their own identity, an identity not formed, secondarily, by relationship to men: 'Nous restons dans l'horizon où l'homme est le modèle du genre humain, il y a des femmes empiriques ou des entités naturelles sans identité propre.'

(111) A distinction may be perceived between masculine and feminine use of language. The feminine is more interactive, personal. The masculine: '…il y a souvent, me semble-t-il, une perte d'individuation. (147). As far as verb tenses are concerned, men use the preterite more, whereas women opt more for the present and future (148). Men: '…les hommes utilisent le langage pour designer la réalité ou produire et établir leurs vérités plus que pour communiquer entre eux.' (159) Men tend to move towards the universal, the indirect. Thus the formula, "j'aime à toi" rather than "je t'aime". The difference lies in the indirection: 'Le "à" est la garantie de l'indirection', the sign of there being two separate parties. (171) "I" and "you" can become "we", but not as a collective (162). We have an obligation to become, to grow into our sex, '…devenir son genre constitue aussi le moyen du retour à soi.' (167) We can accept our physiological makeup, but our identity is our to construct. (168)" 'Je suis née femme, mais je dois encore devenir cette femme que je suis par nature.' (168) The two sexes cannot share the same intentionality, but they can both adopt a stance which renders these intentionalities compatible. This is in fact '…construire une politique de la difference.' (176) The objective should be to connect '…les paroles à la vie', and to establish the necessary "liens" (189) The paradox is that is just the difference recognized that can draw the two sexes together. Irigaray's interpretation of what the virgin Mary represents is equality between man and woman: 'le logos devient dialogique' (192); both sexes are '…sujets de genres différents' (197). They must abandon the impersonal "on" in order to meet up with a real person. This can be achieved by faithfulness to one's own, which then takes on meeting the other as a perceived reality. The masculine and feminine are very different, but they complement each other in our given reality. However, the reality of the difference does not impose a restriction on each. The perception of the total, the universal, is accessible by virtue of that universal being present within us all, if only we reach out to the other's separateness and authentic nature..

Not only women

The search for a reoriented balance has not been confined to female writers, as we see in the case of Roland Barthes (1915-1980). As a male, Barthes self evidently adopts a different perspective, and does not dwell on the historical imbalance between the sexes. In any case, his primary concern is the book, the text, and the relation of the source of the satisfaction that it can render in terms of erotic sense. In *Le Plaisir du Texte*[10]. he tries to discover the source of the pleasure, and the distinction between "plaisir" and "jouissance". Specific to Modernity is a duality: '…un moyen d'évaluer les oeuvres de la modernité: leur valeur venant de leur duplicité.' (14) The erotic lies in the place where the clothing ends: 'L'endroit le plus érotique d'un corps n'est-il pas là où le vêtement baille?' (17) What is the location of that pleasure? 'Le plaisir du texte, c'est le moment où mon corps va suivre ses propres idées – car mon corps n'a pas les mêmes idées que moi.' (27) Plaisir is on the surface: 'le plaisir est dicible, la jouissance ne l'est pas.' (31). Quotes Lacan: '…la jouissance est interdite à qui parle, comme tel, ou encore qu'elle ne puisse être dite, qu'en entre les lignes.' (32) The character of jouissance: '…texte impossible…hors plaisir, hors critique, sauf être atteint par autre texte de

jouissance.' (33) Furthermore, it contains '…la perte abrupte de la socialité…' (54). There are extreme depths and a secret life. Language necessarily derives from another time, so it has to be fought. (55) What is its significance? 'C'est le sens en ce qu'il est produit sensuellement. (82) Interpretation, as a process, constitutes '…la place de la jouissance.' (83) Behind, there is total bodily expression that builds '…une esthétique du plaisir textuel.' (88) The last words of the book: '…ça jouit.' (89) Barthes does not explicitly locate this "jouissance" exclusively in the feminine domain. But his line of argument moves very close to what some of the authors locate as the female domain.

A peculiarly female domain?

This question has arisen by for example, Diana Holmes**,** in her work, *French Women's Writing, 1848-1994*[11]. , writes that what she calls Écriture feminine" (feminine writing), a term coined by Cixous, indicates the specific nature of women's writing. However, the aspiration to equality implies marketing approach. There is a different rhythm, circular rather than linear, says Cixous. This line is taken even further, placing the feminist argument on a sacral plane, by Annie Leclerc (1940-2006)**,** in her work, *Parole de Femme*.[12]. Love is our religion, but there is no church, and it has to be conducted one to another. This is a plaint against the domination, by control of the "word" of women by men. Women have to find their own voice, and this voice now has to be invented. Hitherto, men have taken control, and what is known as the "world" is on fact the world of men: 'Le monde est la parole de l'homme. L'homme est la parole du monde.' (9) The word for "man", "homme" with a lower case h, pretends to assume the place of "Man", Homme, with a capital initial letter, assuming the role of humanity as a whole. But, says Leclerc, this is wholly mistaken, as the word for "man" as used by the male is indeed delimited to the male sex. Unfortunately, human history has fallen in with this adopted assumption, and now women have to find their own language, and, by making it their own, also embrace the whole of humanity. The woman has been complicit in this very specific and different form of domination, and it is this area of cooperation with the man that has too often disguised the reality of this domination/submission. Were it not for this complicity, this domination could never have taken place, and so it is that the author can address her female readership in a plea for them all to discover their authentic being, and voice it unambiguously. The author argues that the sexes, through their own bodies and acquires attitudes, become different from each other. Little girls, unlike little boys, are sexless in nature. For physiological reasons, as their own sex is out of sight and beneath the surface, girls develop in the direction of sexual awareness later than do boys, and then they discover it negatively and with repugnance. (63) Puberty and sexual awareness are not greeted by them with at the process of maturation. The author then moves from this generalization to her own experience of this process. Her first sexual encounter was, for herself, dreadful (literally, full of dread), and could be imaged as a cow going to the slaughter, accepting it as inevitable, as she had no power to withstand it. He dares to move from this piece of autobiography to a generalizing observation: 'Si je m'amusais à faire de la psychologie différentielle des homes et des femmes, c'est d'abord ça que je dirais, les femmes sont de mauvaise

humeur.' Women have this 'bad mood' (mauvaise humeur) because inwardly they feel hostility towards the outside world, as theough they have been robbed of happiness: '…les hommes nous ont vole: le bonheur.' (77). Leclerc develops the theme in a later work, *Hommes et femmes*[13]. where she writes in the first person, that love fails through fault of the other not herself. She seeks an ;'entrée dans l'amour'. And 'Je donnerai lieu à l'amour.' (7) She is totally obsessed with the subject. She declares '…la gloire de féminine' (13), of which the basis is 'jouissance' (14), the term already adopted for this higher form of a more rounded pleasure. The feminine affirms the masculine, and that is the source of male hostility. The feminine derives from a source independent of power, not death; it is nearest to life. Eros is the source of all ecstatic promise and also despair: 'C'est Eros j'en suis sure, qui a crié par la bouche des femmes.' (20) She reacts to de Beauvoir's rejection of female sexuality, to which the latter attributes the root of female servitude. Here, love is the basis for access to God (24). The difference '…ouvre par chacun d'eux, chacune d'eux, l'espace merveilleux du désir.' (25) The author has to make it clear that women are in a different position from other subordinate groups, ethnic, racial, colonized, disabled or whatever. They differ in that they seem to be complicit in their relative status. It is precisely this fact that gives solace to the male, and can justify his stance as well as his own sense of rectitude in this regard.:'Il se sent dénué de responsablité dans cette affaire puisque c'est elle qui s'est soumise.' (41) She becomes a partner in what is after all a duet. But there remains an unequal balance in the couple. It is she who has been sacrifice to the man, and it is ahe who is servile and subsidiary, self abnegating and relatively silent. She also has to be young and beautiful, not in order to comply with her own picture of self and to satisfy her own authentic needs and thrust, but in order to give the man his pleasure and to act out his perceived needs. (45) The author would propose an alternative value system, derived from her own being, and it this that she must excavate. This value system is based on another scale altogether: '…d'autres valeurs que les siennes.' (48) The value system of the male is based on satisfying his drives. Her value system though would not be based on dividing up the world, but rather on a search for wholeness, truth, and acceptance of a totality. The world according to men is not a half truth; it is not a truth at all. The function of the woman is to seek wholeness.

Chantal Chawaf (1943-) plays with the merging of functions in her quasi autobiographical novel, *L'ombre*[14]. This is told primarily from the point of view of Jennifer, 25,, though in the third person. She is studying Russian in Baltimore under her tutor Dr. Wörther, and makes extensive reference to Dostoievski. The setting is early 90s. She is in the process of breaking up from her fiancé, Hans. The principal image, central to the text and that sets mood, is the shade, l'ombre: 'L'ombre exerçait sur lui une attraction inexplicable.' (39) Politics cannot be excluded from literature, some students hold, though their tutor argues that Dostoievski's position is polyphonic. The mood is set by the silence of the "shade".(102). That is the depression that settles over her, and the question asked is whether the inter personal rupture is a form of death. The prose tries to capture this feeling. Jennifer's friend Judy moves her away from this, pleading that '…nous avons la vie devant nous.' (124) She now prays to the life instinct (instinct

de vie). It is: 'la vie retrouvant les mots' (127). The word will redeem! The closing words: '…la vie ne pouvait pas mourir.' (128).

But not only are the genres merged, with fact and fiction obliquely intertwined, but her view of mind and body are also inextricably linked and mutually interdependent. Michaël Bishop in a preface to a study of Chawaf's work, writes: 'l'oeuvre de Chantal Chawaf persiste à creuser avec vigueur et génie la logique pulsionnelle de nos corps, les complexes ambiguités de nos psyches, les options qui restent face aux contraintes qui pèsent.[15] Chawaf is a prolific writer who seeks to take the pulse of the unconscious as much as the conscious. (9) Interestingly, she also sees herself as breaking ranks with the predominant feminist thrust in search of a universalist ethic: 'Mon écriture vit avec ma vie, elle vit de ma vie, donc elle évolue sans cesse.'[16] She is determined not to isolate her writing from her whole life, as well as to merge the conscious into the unconscious, and her body into her mind.

The flight that she takes from apiritual detachment is illustrated by Chawaf's semi fantastic fictional reverie, *Le soleil et la terre*.[17]. This work is set with a freely reconstructed ancient Assyrian setting as background chorus, told in the first person by a passionate woman. The quotations used, as from Assyrian annals, fill in a historical gap to the contemporary Middle Eastern life as lived by the narrator heroine. She, as is the case with the other main character, is given no name, and the plot, such as it is, is subsidiary to the tone. It luxuriates in the joy of rich colour, described design, pattern of erotic life as contrasted with the violence of the world outside, whose king's annals are quoted. The murder, thus the death beyond makes a vivid contrast with the force within, and the landscape itself merges with the contact between the bodies and the substance substitutes. There is a detached description of the varieties of intense erotic joy. The plot itself sinks into ecstasy: ,Sa chaleur faisait fondre des morceaux de soleil, s'emparait de mes fruits, il se liquéfait sur moi, il rallongeait les nuits, je m'ouvrais au feu liquide qui se formait de mon corps mêlé au sien.' (34) The title of the book indicates its attachment to nature, to the external world as well as to its sensual delight, and thence, to the world within of the narrator. This is all hungrily erotic, and also envelops and subsumes the desires of the partner. Pain and pleasure jostle against each other, and they alternate almost imperceptibly, though necessarily. Her lover's pleasure is so painful for her ("me"), but that was his urgent need. (31). She saw her role as satisfying that need, and that was part of her own pressure on herself.. The whole book is a soliloquy to ecstasy, self absorbed, but also shared and joint. She reaches into the innermost recesses of herself by the imaginative effort of reaching out into the passion of the other too. The extended, undulating sentences employed in the book match the vibrancy and strength of the feeling sought. She contrasts man-made culture, knowledge and rational science, with love, tenderness, and sensibility, all of these emotions leading to abandonment. (103) The often abhorred feeling of jealousy is here recognized in her own demands for the total possession of her lover. (104) So uncharacteristic of the stereotype of the feminist, the heroine here plays the part of the female passively waiting to be taken by the all powerful, thrusting male. (109) It is the sheer physical,

from whatever may be the source, that nourishes. This source achieves its purposes in the physical manifestation of its power.. She addresses her man as the spring of her life: '…cette ultime nourriture du tu es.' (117) We have here the most extreme expression of abasement on the part of a woman, accepting the overweening attraction and domination of the man, and her acceptance of it.. This sot of passion is matched by her delight in the physical contact with her little girl, by the touch of the child: '…j'ai besoin de la toucher.' (169) We conclude with the source of light, indicated from the outset, the light of the sun. The heart lights up, as, to develop her point of comparison, the earth is lit up by the day. That is where the sun emerges.

Towards the masculine stance

For an alternative posture deriving from a radical feminist writer, also a declared lesbian, we have Monique Wittig (1935-2003)in her novel, *Les guérillères*.[18],. Tthe principal character is the grammatical third person, known as'on', i.e. a neutral and unnamed other. The women here are in an ecstatic daze, drugged, reminiscent of *The Bachae* by Euripides. The ceremonies revolve around the death of Adèle Dorge. Now they want to break with the past: 'Elles disent qu'il faut alors cesser d'exalter les vulves. Elles disent qu'elles doivent rompre le dernier lien qui les rattache à une culture morte. Elles disent que tout symbole qui exalte le corps fragmenté et temporaire, doit disparaître.' (102) War is raging with the army of men. Time will come when revenge will be taken; man has invented 'your' history: 'Mais le temps vient où tu peux écraser le serpent sous ton pied, le temps vient oÜ tu peux crier, dressée, pleine d'ardeur et de courage, le paradis est à l'ombre des epées.' (159) The war ends in liberty for the women; '…nous entonnâmes alors la marche funèbre, un air lent, mélancolique et pourtant triomphant.' (208). This is the culmination and conclusion of the book.

Wittig had been one of the founders of the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*, and on August 26, 1970, she put flowers under the Arc de Triomphe to honour the wife of the Unknown Soldier, this symbolic action was considered to be the founding event of French feminism.[19] But she also denied the existence of a specific and restricted women's literature, saying that the word 'woman' only has meaning in heterosexual systems of thought…Lesbians are not women. (1978).[20] So, despite the fact that the characters in her work are female, she, as a declared Lesbian, does not see them as a separate sex, but as people. She was the kind of feminist who sought to abolish gender categories.

The Shift

Commentary changes the nature of its concerns and the manner of its address as it follows in the wake of larger historical patterns. The position of the relationship between the sexes has moved as has the emancipation of women in so many areas, the change in the nature of employment, educational opportunity, and the distribution of family responsibility. So great has been the transformation over a half century or so, from the second half of the twentieth century that it would indeed be surprising if the nature of discourse on the matter of female writing had not also seen a considerable shift.

A feature of interest in this literature is the combination of genres to the extent that we sometimes find it hard to make the distinction between fiction and essay, between the writer addressing the reader in her own voice and the creation of characters and situations beyond herself. This seems to be an authorial device, both letting us into the recesses of her thinking and feeling world, and the supposed exploration of the other.

A large issue dividing the feminists both synchronically and diachronically is whether women should be seeking to be the equal of men and thus making a bid against the historical injustice of their unfair status, so lowly and predictable, and those who would rather stake out a distinctive position. This latter asserts the difference between the genders, thus raising the distinctive character of feminism, We have seen here a range of approaches, both of which assert the need for a corrective, whether in the direction of liberation according to a masculinising model, or in the apparently opposite path.

Portraying the condition of women as a subordinated species is basically problematic. They clearly do not constitute a minority, so they have the potential power of their numbers. There has also been, on the whole, no overt attempt at suppression by the collective body of men. So we are not dealing here with the common notion of oppression. Women also do not, in the majority, express widespread discontent with their lowly status. So there must have been collusion, whether explicit or implicit. Now there are basically two possible directions for the women's movement. Both accept the essential division between man and woman. Who after all could fail to do just that? But one possible path can lead to the aspiration towards blurring the distinction, in political, social, economic and cultural terms. In an overall sense, this is the demand for equality, which seems natural, self-evident and reasonable. The other path leads to an assertion and even a glorification of the distinction determined by nature, and then demanding a new and specifically feminine tone, a woman's voice. This would imply an alternative life for the gender as a whole, and then for all humanity too, which, in this view, would also lead to an improved relationship between the sexes, and a resolution of mutuality. All streams of Feminism not only recognize the essential division that has come about in their specificity as women, but also that there has been a deep historical injustice, which needs to be made good. Of course, this injustice, which has roots deep in the story of human experience, continues into the present, although it may take on a different form. But the way in which this might be repaired is still problematic.It can be either be achieved, or maybe facilitated, either by an attempt at rapprochement, or by further separation. This could lead even to a situation in which women create and then narrate their own distinctive stories, without necessary reference to the other (the first?) sex.

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Mahashweta Devi's "Draupadi" and Kamala Das's "Kalyani" : Feminist Perspectives

SUNITHA BYRAPPA

A comparative study of "Draupadi" and "Kalyani" as stories of exploitation of the female by the male must acknowledge some basic factors in the creative and historical worlds of Mahashweta Devi and Kamala Das. The former is from Western part of India West Bengal and the latter is from Southern part of India Kerala region wise. Although the arena of a woman's experience is universal, Devi and Das enter into artistic creativity from widely differing cultures which have been afflicted by similar realities. Nevertheless Devi and Das share a fundamental sensitivity regarding the problems of the oppressed women. It is the intensity and nature of their commitment to the cause of women who are victimized by society that regulates the form of everything they have said or written.

Mahashweta Devi, the renowned Bengali writer uses her writing as a weapon to fight against oppression, exploitation, injustice and discrimination of all sorts. She makes an effort to reflect the injustice, disparities that exist between the Elite, Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. It is well-known that Mahashweta Devi's ideological commitment leans toward Marxism. A Marxist Writer consciously lures the interest of the reader toward the disparities that are there in the society through their Writing. There are numerous writers who have depicted such inequalities in society – to quote a few, Maxim Gorky, Ngugi Wa´ Thiang´o, Chinua Achebe, Mulk Raj Anand, Wole Soyinka.

In India, the problem of social injustice is much more because of the pernicious and more dangerous caste system. The offshoot of the perpetuation of the problem of caste led to the origin of Dalit literature. Many Dalits all over the country under the influence of Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule claimed social justice in their Writing. They protested against the practice of Untouchability, Exploitation, Oppression based on caste and used literature as a weapon to complete their mission. The element of protest and fight against evils in society is not new to Bengali literature. The Bengali intellectuals were the first to receive the modern progressive ideas from the West. The Renaissance entered India through Bengal. The well-known Bengali writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankhim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Madusudan Dutt, Saratchandra, Anupama Devi protested against the prevalent social evils in the society not only in their writing but also in their public speeches. As H.A. Singh says:

> The sense of protest usually springs from an extreme sensitiveness to the disparity between ideals and practices. They fight a fierce battle with the cruel systems that deny life to others and rise in revolt against the exploiters and a hostile social environment that belittles the exploited (13).

Mahashweta Devi belongs to the group of writers who have been incessantly striving for the welfare of the tribals, bonded labourers, sharecroppers and other marginalized communities. She is not only a writer but an activist, playwright, columnist, magazine editor and essayist.

Most of the writings of Mahashweta Devi are set in the context of the Post – Independent Indian scenario. Born in pre-independent India, she has been a witness to numerous developments that have occurred before and after independence. She is especially fond of portraying the problems of the tribals in the Indian villages, their exploitation by the landlords and money lenders. She champions the noble cause of exposing the atrocities perpetrated by the corrupt officials, police, government contractors so on and so forth.

Regarding her commitment to writing, Devi says:

> I have never had the capacity nor the urge to create art for art's sake. Since I haven't ever learnt to do anything more useful, I have gone on writing. I have found authentic documentation to be the best medium for protest against injustice and exploitation (36).

It is against this backdrop that I would like to examine Mahashweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" – an important character in the *Mahabharata* who was married to five husbands by accident and disrobed by the Kauravas that became a slur on the manhood of her wedded husbands – the Pandavas. Mahashweta Devi gives a new twist to this story, a modern interpretation. The story is taken from her collection of stories called *Breast stories* which includes "Draupadi", "Breast Giver" and "Behind the Bodies".

The protagainst of the story is Dopdi and this is how the story begins:

> Name Dopdi Majhi, age twenty–seven, husband Dulna Majhi (deceased), domicile cherakhan, Bankrahjarh, Scar on the shoulder (dopdi was shot), information whether dead or alive and / or assistance in arrest: one hundred rupees… (1).

Dopdi and her husband Dulna were suspected as the main culprits in the famous 'Operation Bakuli' when three villages were cordoned off and machine gunned. They had gone underground for a long time in a "Neanderthal darkness", as they were suspected to be the chief instigators in the murder of the landlord of the village Surja Sahu and his son, occupying upper caste wells and tube wells during the drought.

Thus the study is a serious critique on the socio-economic values that exist in our society. Mahashweta Devi points out the exploitative social system that is discriminatory and oppressive toward the weak both physically and economically through the imagery of the 'breast'. The breast becomes an object of torture, revenge and exploitation of class, caste and gender.

Dopdi Majhi, the tribal revolutionary, the most notorious female becomes a nightmare to Captain Arjun Singh, the architect of the 'Operation Bakuli' followed by 'Operation Forest Jharkhani'. He is forced to take up voluntary retirement as he could

not endure the dreadful fear of the black skinned tribals. The Senanayak who assumes charge of the operation against the tribal insurgency kills Dulna, Dopdi's husband when he was drinking water from the river. Dulna's corpse is used as a bait to capture Dopdi and other tribal youth but they refuse to be trapped. In a treacherous, cunning and abominable way the Senanayak captures Dopdi with the help of the native betrayers Shomai and Budhna. She was undressed, gang raped, breasts and nipples torn off and when she was asked to put on the cloth, she refuses to do so thereby challenging the male audacity that it was not so easy to cloth her as they had stripped her so unashamedly. She says;

> What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you cloth me again? Are you a man?... There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on. Kounter me – come on, Kounter me - ? (23).

While uttering these unexpected tirade of words, Draupadi pushes the Senanayak with her mangled breasts. He is extremely apprehensive to stand before an unarmed target for the first time in his life. Gayathri Spivak says that this story insists on the fact that the male leadership stops at this point. This story as she says "is an allegory of the woman's struggle within the revolution in a shifting historical moment" (24).

Mahashweta Devi portrays Dopdi in contrast to the romanticized version of Draupadi in the epic *Mahabharata*. In the epic, even though Draupadi had five husbands when she was disrobed none could safeguard her modesty but Lord Krishna who saved her honour by clothing her infinitely. It is not surprising or shocking if Dopdi in this story is mercilessly stripped and gangraped by the police reducing her to the sexual receptacle of the male libido. In both the contexts, man plays a dominant, vicious role of humiliating a hapless woman in a patriarchal society which becomes the prerogative of the male hegemony. As Dopdi had nobody to rescue her she devises an incredible bold way of resistance by refusing to be clothed by the men in the office. When she questions 'are you a man?' and says 'there isn't a man here' she challenges their manliness. Mahashweta Devi has implied that oppression stretched to the extreme end could compel the oppressed to express the extreme possible resistance that makes it difficult and uneasy, uncomfortable, embarrassing for the exploiter of the sex, the abuser of the female body. It is in this context that Simone de Beauvior needs to be quoted.

> When we abolish the slavery of half of humanity, together with the whole system of hypocrisy that it implies, then the "division" of humanity will reveal its genuine significance and the human couple will find its true form (78).

The Repressive State Apparatus represented by the police in Mahashweta Devi's short story can be compared to the same role played by them in Kamala Das's short story "Kalyani". Both the writers are highly critical about the men in Khaki uniform who misuse power to subjugate women according to their whims and fancies.

In Kamala Das's short story "Kalyani", Ammini- the protagainst of the story is robbed of her identity and christened with a new name by the police in the station called Kalyani which remains enigmatic to her till the end. Though she protests that her real

name is Ammini they do not listen to her and she is arrested by five policemen who represent the five Pandavas unable to save Draupadi. The story begins when Kalyani's car stopped by five policemen for not driving the car properly even though she was driving slowly and correctly according to traffic rules. When she asks one of them about the cause of her arrest, he tells her to submit all her complaints to the person inside who is addressed as 'Master' by him. The master is compared to the modern Duryodhana who insists upon disorbing Draupadi openly in the Assembly of courtesans. The master suddenly starts calling her as Kalyani even though she protests that her name is not Kalyani. He insists upon calling her so depriving her of identity. This incident reminds one of Jean Rhys's classic novel – *Wide Sargasso Sea* in which the protagonist of the novel – Antionette is called as 'Bertha' soon after her marriage by her husband. When she protests – "My name is not Bertha; why do you call me Bertha? he answers : "Because it's a name", I am particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha" (134).

Identity is deliberately denied to her because, psychologically speaking, her husband tries to indoctrinate her mind that she is someone else. He tries to hypnotize her by asserting that she is Bertha to which Antoinette says that it is also Obeah practice to call someone so. When she says: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know that's Obeah too" (147). Christophme, the maid servant explains that Obeah is spirit theft that can reduce human beings to the state of puppets, dolls or zombis. As slaves had their identity erased with names given by their masters, he tries to hypnotise by calling her as Marionette, Antoinette, Marionetta, Antionette by which he casts an incantatory effect on her mind. Christoplme recognizes this and accuses him of spirit theft. He controls her speech like a puppet master. He knows that he has destroyed something beyond his experience, something that is out of reach. He loathes her 'Otherness' and reveals himself as a practitioner of colonial Obeah. With the confidence of his belief in his own cultural and racial superiority he steals her spirit and drives her mad as in the classic novel *Jane Eyre* considered as a sequel to *Wide Saragasso Sea*

Ammini is in war with the structures which constitute and execute power. Sexual politics plays a determined and dominant role in Ammini's victimization who is subjected to two kinds of oppression. One is Repressive State Apparatus represented by the police; another is Ideological State Apparatus- the family through which she derives her Individual Identity. She witnesses a final breakdown when her husband abandons her.

The concept of patriarchy fetishized though it may have become a necessary focus on the idea that a woman's oppression is not an isolated misfortune under one man's tyrannical authority. What is more threatening is that she is at the receiving end of an entire system of social structures and practices based on the fascist ideology that men are and should be superior to women.

In Kamala Das's short story too the master tries to rob Ammini of her identity. Ammini implores her so-called husband to the spot but the policemen do not permit her

to do so saying that the crime was committed by her and not her husband. The Master policeman walks in and calls her as Kalyani. He ignores her and pronounces a judgment – 'three months rigorous imprisonment'. No uniform is given to her and she remains naked. She wakes up to a sound and sees her husband Menon, standing by the door. He complains to her that he never expected such behavior from her and walks away coolly by calling her as 'harlot'.

Kate Millet in her seminal work *Sexual Politics* argues that this system of domination of one collective group defined by birth over another collective group, also defined by birth is a power-game, a political manoeuvering more universal than any other form of oppression. This system she considers,

> tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However muted its present appearance may be, sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power (25).

In view of the statement made by Kate Millet quoted above, what binds Mahashweta Devi's short story "Draupadi" and Kamala Das's short story "Kalyani" is a shared view of oppression and marginalization. They try to subvert the model role – Draupadi as conceived in our mythology and facilitate redefinition of the female. It is in this process of subverting the female image that both the writers have succeeded in portraying their ability as postmodern feminist writers. Ruthven states that "a literary work should provide role models and instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self-actualizing whose identities are not dependent on men" (13).

Not surprisingly, the most searching examinations and analyses –though not necessarily the most direct of women's place, of women's search for identity have been made by women themselves. As Tagore acknowledges in a review of Sharat Kumari Choudharani's Shubha – Bibaba, "No male writer can write about the women's story the way the woman has" (qtd. in Dec 4). Women's discourse may have its "silence, euphemism, or circumlocution, its blanks and gaps and silences, which are not the spaces where female consciousness reveals itself but the blinds of a 'prison –house of language'" (255).

In both the short stories, women are not wooden and idealistic characters. The duplicity in society, the hypocrisy of the system, the psychological and physical trials of the heroines, the negative role of the community, the bondages of women are all very well mirrored. The rise and fall of women's voices, nuances which reflect the subtle irony, the suggestive, imagistic, lyrical, emotional, introspective qualities of their discourse are portrayed in an effective manner. Dopdi as well as Ammini are subjected to traumatic psychic experience and are caught in the gradual disintegration of a traditional value system. The external questions posed by the writings of Women Writers could very well be summed up in the words of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar:

> The woman artist enters the caverns of her own mind and finds there the scattered leaves not only of her own power but the tradition that might have

> generated that power. The body of her precursor's art, and thus the body of her own art, lies in pieces around her, dismembered, dis-remembered, disintegrated. How can she remember it, and become a member of it, join it and rejoin it, integrate it, and in doing so achieve her own integrity, her own selfhood (98).

The ability to construct a new image of woman by deconstructing the myth of Draupadi, by revolting against the system courageously is what makes Mahashweta Devi's short story more significant than Kamala Das's short story. One can discern the fierce feminine sensibility in Mahashweta Devi's story although both the writers become symbols of the oppressed lives that women live in traditional patriarchal societies and more significantly symbols of the feminist protest of such oppression. Both the stories are serious social critiques. In Mahashweta Devi's short story, there is a re-affirmation of women, woman reclaimed of body and spirit. When Dopdi refuses to be clothed in front of the policemen she seems to be declaring that the identificatory category of 'woman' is not necessarily determined by the anatomy with which she is born. Thus feminism has its accent on politics: "It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men is society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become" (77).

The approaches to Feminism are various; such as Marxist, Existentialist, Radical, Psychoanalytic and Postmodern. But it is the shared view of oppression and marginalization that coheres most of the women's writing. Feminism in short, is more a concern for women and is meant to establish a new identity for women to understand the female predicament. "It is the task of a woman writer to erase the unrealistic labels and portray the true self of woman; she should join hands with others in changing the traditional images of woman, explode the model role assigned by the patriarchal society, and facilitate re-definition of the female" (85). It is in this process of subverting the female image that Mahashweta Devi and Kamala Das have displayed their ability as feminist writers. Ruthven states that "a literary work should provide role models and instill a positive sense of feminine identity by portraying women who are self actualizing whose identities are not dependent on men" (92).

Mahashweta Devi and Kamala Das as novelists and short story writers have always championed the rights of women. They see themselves as the paradigm of the Indian woman struggling against entrenched social and sexual prejudices. They subvert the female archetypes of womanhood, oppose a fiction of idealized, contended femininity with brute facts of sexual experience and female suffering. In their stories dependent females are always pitted against powerful institutionalized male forces and hence women must resist the trap of false protectionism. Their stories retextualise a key concern, the question of female sexuality as it operates within this shady world. The heroines are caught in the seamless game of seduction and betrayal, logic and unreason.

In Kamala Das's short story and Mahashweta Devi's short story, the police Inspector – supposed to be the custodian of society, upholder of human rights, a

representative of Government Institution indulge in the infringement of rights and becomes an instrument of oppression, an evil force. Their use of shorter form creates fiction that is nevertheless more accomplished and frequently brilliant. Their heroines are schooled in suffering and fall into a pattern of social abuse and emotional trauma. The stories written by both the writers are about extremities of human behavior, about women struggling to come to terms with lives hopelessly compromised by events that seem beyond their control.

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"The Silent Handmaiden": Poison & Poeisis in the *Women of Trachis*

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Surveying the unfolding trauma of Herakles and Deianeira, the chorus identifies the poison that connects the four main players in erotic magnetism: "That silent handmaiden, Cyprian Aphrodite is revealed; it is her work" (859-61). From the first it is Aphrodite, in the midst of the waters as Herakles wrestled with Achelous, mediating beast-man metamorphoses, joining erotics with poetics (7-17; 503-30). This is an extension of her essence, formed in the midst of waters as the result of trauma in the marriage bed (Hesiod 132-5). The immersion of Herakles in these erotic drives and changes unites him with its major tropes: tri-form river-god, hydra and centaur. Aphrodite too is linked to "the will of the beast," Nessus (*WT* 934-5) and the hydra (987) as Deianira, unintentionally closes the circle of poison. Herakles and his specter, Nessus become polarities circulating the fluid that animates his wife, also a transforming mediator: Seeking to accommodate shape-changing Aphrodite, ubiquitous in her forms and compulsion of gods and humans ("she is in the swell of the sea…and like a bee she flits"), the role of Deianira emphasizes the link of the Cyprian to the beasts (934-5; *Hippolytus* 447-50, 561-3, 359-60). But the effort fails and implacable power asserts itself in a tragedy of eros.

Erotic desire and the horrible transfiguration in the origin of Aphrodite is poiesis as idealized trauma and primal displacement (*Hesiod* 132-5); a potent change-agent, it eats Herakles from within: "The filthy thing eats me again… the inexorable flowering of madness" sparked by the "sickness" of erotic desire (*W T* 441-7, 475-7, 543, 986-7, 999, 1030 and 1138). A similar ambiguous charm destroys Hippolytus in his passionate virginity and Phaedra in her passion and shame (*H* 405, 479, 597). For Hellas, eros is poeisis: its metamorphic ambiguities and transfigurative power fuse god, beast and man, a "wedding" in which identity is doubled and boundaries dissolve: Iole is "the filly of Oechalia"; Bacchus, "beast with a laughing face" has a female and male birth and Semele a "bloody doom" (*H* 545-63; *B* 1020). The silent handmaiden does the god-work: "the shaft neither of fire nor of stars is superior to that of Aphrodite's." The "keys to her dearest inner chamber" are held by "Eros, tyrant of men" (*H* 538-42). The transformative, compulsive power in theurgic poeisis is the glory, horror and fascination of Greece and, beginning often in erotic trauma, its possession and ensuing displacements of its host follow a trajectory from idyll to apocalypse to elegy. This pattern is illustrated in *the Women of Trachis.*

The Chorus, in the first two passages quoted above is right so perhaps it is appropriate that the play bears their name rather than that of the greatest hero of Hellas, "the best of all men" as Hyllus says (*WT* 811); but the best has an ambiguous nature and is, in his ambiguity a liminal figure for poison. *The Women of Trachis* is a passion play, a primer for its world-girdling successor. Herakles, a martyr to Eros is a full-bodied prototype of the redeemer of the West, a meta-figure that transfigures. The cultural sequel, the church also transfigures the role of the Queen. For Hellas, her role is to torture her namesake: Hera ("protectress") whose name he bears, an ironic witness to her cruel glory (*kleos*) and might. This prototype underwent inversion when Rome's appropriation of Judaic ethics sought to cleanse divinity of lust and revenge, divine adultery and composite beings. In Sophocles, these passions join together the play's main characters in a game that reduces all things to the symbolic essence of a centaur, a "beast's treacherous words" and "murderous confusion" (837-9), an "impulse" (*orge*) of erotic power and transformative vengeance. If not as extensively as Euripides in *Hippolytus* or *Herakles*, Sophocles indicts the vindictive cruelty of the Greek gods, ("Zeus, whoever this Zeus may be") and their lack of compassion, "what is here now is pitiful for us, and shameful for the gods," Hyllus concludes (1266-72). Euripides has Herakles ask, "Who could pray to such a goddess," his suffering being her "glory" (*Herakles* 1264, 1304-11). The "renown" of the "Defender" is to destroy her mortal scapegoat; his labors and suffering witness her divine spite. It is perhaps in similar mood that Homer refers to the gods as "the dogs of war" and, also in that work, Apollo refers to them as "monsters of cruelty" who delight in the mutilation of human flesh (*Iliad* xx, xxiv). Transfigured by envenomed agony which binds him to the hydra and centaur, Herakles is a trope of poiesis and expresses its transformative erotic component.

The demonic (supernatural and metamorphic) ironies in the deaths of Herakles and Deianeira are supreme emblems of the investment of the gods of Hellas in the primal poeisis, the formation of Aphrodite from the passionate violence of the divine marital bed, a radical displacement and subsuming of the father. The Herakles myths, imbued with divine jealousy and heroic madness dramatize the cultural logic encoded in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The disfiguring metamorphoses of battle, depicted in *the Iliad*, also were prompted by Aphrodite whose singular allure, mixing "pleasures and penalties" enchants Paris into his "fatal error" in "the audience in the shepherd's hut," the "hateful contest of beauty" (*Iliad* xxiv; *Iph. Aulis*1308). Desire forms cultures, shatters bodies and generates literature. Thus the messenger relates, "It was love alone that bewitched him into this violence" against Eurytus and Oechalia (*WT* 354-368). The constant cultural theme is "Cypris the beguiling," she "who crushes with desire" (*Iph. Aulis* 1302-03). In *WT*, the desire she embodies circulates like poison binding all the personae together as the spectacle in the *theatron* ("viewing place") of Dionysus united Athenians in seeing (*idein*) tragedies of possession, displacement and dissolution of identity into the mask, of life into the image and, then, the collapse of images and gods into human wreckage and social ruin. Desire and its work is the primal "it" (id) and its transformative dynamics link Aphrodite to Dionysus as forces of poiesis that drive apocalyptic and elegiac dramas of tragic rapture. Life's imperative was enactment.

The play allows one to be plainer: the god-beast or id at the root of identity invades *the bed*, the fulcrum of theurgic demonism and site of ambiguity, treacherous words and murderous confusion. Erotic desire is "that thing" (id), the identity of Herakles and his dark identical, Nessus. Deianeira is the vector of their powers and site of their and Aphrodite's full manifestation in the trauma of the marriage bed (506-16; 913-35). The artist in 'everyman,' the goddess reproduces the quality of her own genesis.

Aphrodite embodies and prompts erotic traumas, generating the somber elegance of image work. The link between poison, poeisis and art make *the Women of Trachis* an emblematic cultural product. Theurgic poeisis reflects or doubles character, an imaging in which divine presence or decree dissolves or transforms identities. Thus Jokasta curses the "infamous double bond" in which she "she brought forth husband by her husband," that is, in which the identities of son and husband melted together, an alchemy wrought by the riddles of gods and beasts. Thus Oedipus, raving like a bull god and "bellowing terribly" curses his mother's womb as "this field of double sowing" (*OT* 1241-61). The sexual source and site of exchange, like the Celtic "Cauldron of Plenty" is an erotic grail hosting and, as it were, consuming its host; a "garden of fertility" and source of magike tekne: one eats and is eaten. This nexus of desire, horror and transformation has a magical and violent quality that defeats purity and distinctions; its metamorphic base obliterates boundaries and demands for its play a radical antinomian freedom. "For she is terrible, and blows on all there is, and like a bee she flits" (*Hippolytus* 562-4). In WT these metamorphoses invert and expose as futile, self-negating, even delusional the hero's purifying war against beasts: his various lusts, including the perverse situation with Omphale, destroy him, commingling his passion with the murderous desires of those same beasts, lusts which ultimately derive from a "silent handmaiden" whose allure takes form in the envenomed semen of a centaur. Aphrodite's 'honey' is like Coleridge's nightmare: "desire with loathing strangely mixed." The arrows with which Herakles slew the Hydra, dipping their tips in its poison, and then slew Nessus as it sought to rape Dejanira comes back to him as her gift, the robe, an intended love-charm, soaked with the Centaur's toxic blood and semen: (*Sohpocles II* 67). The circulation through the play of the Centaur's fluids establishes an intriguing tetrad of horror and suggests the shifty, transformative power encoded in Aphrodite's genesis in Hesiod's and Homer's versions. (In Homer, her birth from Zeus and "Dione," genitive form of Zeus is a figure of auto-eroticism). The gift of the envenomed robe (a displaced venomous embrace) is one that Herakles, through his lust for Iole in effect sends himself; the origin of his drama, rooted in the sexual - emotional play and spite of the highest gods, takes form for Sophocles in a loving wife's weaving: the charmed robe, embodying Aphrodite's power, is a meta-figure of *magike tekne* and the pastoral – apocalyptic – elegiac trajectory it initiates.

Deianeira as much as Nessus, Herakles and Aphrodite circulates the hydra's venom, the lethal side of Aphrodite's honey, a transmuted semen potent with self-negating power surging, lunging and consuming. All is suffused with the imperatives of "the goddess of love's bed" (516). Love doesn't just transform: it doubles, negates and exposes, all the powers of imagery.

Deianira sends the love-charm because Herakles sends his beautiful captive Iole home to adorn his bed: his desire triggers the poison. Iole goes under the marital sheets; the robe enwraps Herakles. The "husbandless bed" is reflected in the dual, suicidal sacrifices of husband and wife. "Strong is the victory the Cyprian goddess always wins" (*WT* 106-10, 499). Upon their love, as on the shimmering surface of the shield of Herakles is erotic terror, Perseus fleeing the gorgons. For Hellas, the imperatives of the bed and of Aphrodite are victories of erotic trauma, its attendant displacements and changes. This is the fecund pit of Western poeisis, the source of its most characteristic and fierce imagery and its residue of horror, of individual and cultural collapse; the place or trope where its concept of the divine, now appropriated by the State intersects the host on which it feeds.

The essence of image-work, the idealization of identity, the purification of ambiguity by fictions is dramatic, and drama, regardless the genre or art form is the essential mode of a project of idealization which carries the seeds of self-splitting (the reflection of meiosis in poiesis merits scrutiny), alienation and death. The self-generating drama of the West carries over Hellenism's main site for horrific commingling, the marital bed by making it into a theurgic cultural 'bed.' This occurred via the forced joining of the radically different civilizations of which the West constructed itself. The 'rape' or appropriation of Jewish ethics, historical narratives and concepts of Providence and divine compassion to Greco-Roman political, mythic and ideological forms, the metamorphic substrate of its worldview and pantheism was and is intrinsically unstable. This forced union launched compulsions to confess, reveal, purify and idealize, to expose and simultaneously reject the unwilling alien partner or captive host of a goddess cult. (Nietzsche's comments on the Greeks as a people eager to be inseminated and the Jews as a seminal race {*BGE* 8.248} are intriguing here). In doing so it strengthened the implicit dynamics of poeisis as a path from idyll (conceiving the new or ideal self), apocalypse (separation of image from host; exposure of the delusive aspects of the idyll), and elegy for the ruined image-ideal and those from whom it was generated. Drama is apocalyptic or "revelatory" action in that it always is in part confession and exposure of traumatic material in an "artifice of eternity" arising from myriad forms of cultural disembodiment (mutilation). Beginning with Symbolism this is shown with obsessive force.

Emerging at the onset of the early modern period, Symbolism uses realist precision to depict the primitive and irrational. It foregrounds eroticism and a giddy delight in the exotic and violent, especially decapitation of the prophetic or lyrical voice. An elegiac seduction emerges from works like those of J.W. Waterhouse as if he and his confreres were painting counterparts to *the Women of Trachis* which foregrounds the horrors of the marital bed; the banishment of the father from bed (given full expression via modern "family law" and in vitro techniques) and, finally, in the Jesus cult, of the bed itself, idealization of the Queen and reduction of the husband to a surrogate as is typical in Greek myths of mortal women inseminated by Zeus with the role of father belatedly taken by a mortal man ("son of Laertes but seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus").

The motifs focused by Symbolism bring central Western themes and topics to a climax. Conception is magical, describable only as a figure, — a white hart jumping "through a glass window that neither perished was nor broken" (Malory 17:9, Baines 433) and, thus, must be enforced as dogma; by aesthetic or institutional fiat the fiction gains de facto reality; the meta-figure of Western poeisis, the Grail is a nightmare confounding of blood and purity, of maimed 'thighs' from which human beings pray for redemption. The War on/of Terror is its ultimate trope: emasculation of memory and refraction of reality in a bed of envenomed imagery.

In Hellenism the disembodied soul is an image, a terrible "shade" of life as seen in book eleven of *the Odyssey* where the shade lives on the blood of life. Drinking blood and worshipping imagery are forbidden by Judaism (Leviticus 17:10-14) but in the West's cult of aesthetics the image drains and feeds on the body of life: like the Castle of Maidens, poeisis is vampiric. At the end, "everyone is surrounded by his own words [images, reflections or shadows] as with a wall of mirrors" (Kundera 92) and "nothing is but what is not."

This pattern is satirized wittily by Kundera who calls the idealized image "fate": "Fate had no intention of lifting a finger for Mirek (for his happiness, security, his good spirits, his health) whereas Mirek is ready to do everything for his destiny (for its grandeur, its clarity, its beauty, its style)" [Kundera 11, passim].

The ancient Greeks, Homer, Hesiod and the tragedians provide abundant images of traumatic ambiguity, usually erotic and its magical or bloody transformations. They are less interested in, or discount the magical transposition of these horrors into (mainly) pastoral images as typify the stories of Ovid and Romance. Early on, the Greek focus is on erotic trauma, pollution and atonement by death for errors provoked by gods who also are ruled by Love with its primal mixing of wrath, spite, 'gender war' and unnatural transformation. Closely linked, beast and god combine to drive and destroy the human, a process von Kleist, a harbinger of regression, heralded as a path to grace. When Deianira hears the true reason for her husband's sack of "high-towered Oechalia," that "it was Love alone that bewitched him into this violence," she comments understandingly:

> How foolish one would be to climb into the ring
> With Love, and try to trade blows with him, like a boxer.
> For he rules even the gods as he pleases, and
> He rules me—why not another woman like me?
> …I would be altogether mad
> To blame my husband because he suffers from this sickness,
> Or that woman: She has been guilty of nothing shameful… (WT 333-60, 441-7)

As in the love of Iphis for Ianthe in *Metamorphoses* Book 9, or its magical fulfillment, Deianira sees no shame in the affair of Herakles and Iole for human beings are free only to improvise within the roles scripted for them by the gods. They feel intensely, — grief, joy, lust or rage but know they are not fully or mainly responsible for passions whose traumatic compulsion is theurgic, the essence of their art, especially in

that all-conquering goddess, born of horror who through her masculine noun-concept ("Eros") "rules even the gods." The core of Greek poeisis in the West is a process of projection, alienation and submission to irrational compulsion: of the possession of man by woman and his worship of her powers, the consummate change agent, host of poiesis and passion of the "Maimed King" (Baines 427 inter alia), a sequel to Herakles, Oedipus and many others.

Aphrodite embodies the ambiguous horror, "the sweetnesses and deception" of the West's cult of aesthetics, the beautiful female form made of disembodied male parts: the image, like the sankgreall, idealizes a horrible hybrid matter. The process itself is horror: possession and displacement of the original host, body or culture, source of myriad body snatcher or zombie films. Her increasing dominance in the imagery of the modern West and diffusion through pop culture indicates the Greek substrate asserting and exposing itself, sloughing off its Judaic ethics, their original forms and as they were re-formatted by the Church. The latter's aesthetics, rooted in magical transformations emphasizing blood communion and mystical 'semen' testified to the dominance of a Dionysian aesthetic and ontological model, nurtured it and eventually disintegrates and dominates through it till, in the end, shadows live everywhere in what is termed, "virtual reality" or, as Macbeth says in his self-negating affinity with the witches, "nothing is but what is not." *Macbeth*, too, is about things "twice done and then done double" (1.6.14-15), an extended trope of poiesis, its doublings and disintegration of the host dressed, and then dressing himself "in borrowed robes."

As noted briefly above, even the main alternate version of the genesis of Aphrodite contains erotic and identity confusion and magical aspects. *The Iliad* identifies Aphrodite as the daughter of Zeus and the Titaness, Dione, a prophetess at the sacred oak in Dodona (Book 5 passim). Dione, who comforts her "laughter-loving" daughter after Diomedes wounds her, bears a name that simply means "female divinity": a female Zeus who presides over Zeus's oak, her name hints at the birth of Aphrodite, the power that rules mortals and immortals out of an erotic and image-making (prophetic) encounter of dios with himself or his 'female self" (Dione). But Dione is the genitive of Zeus: she is a figure of his self-insemination just as the gestation of Dionysus, the form dissolver, in his 'thigh' expresses the doubled aspect of Zeus's nature: his hermaphroditic generative powers express the doublings of image-work. In his female form, Dione-Zeus presides over his 'oak' in a type of his incorporation of his wife Metis so he can give birth to a fully grown virgin warrior, Athena, a complement to the Cyprian, diverse warriors that show what Zeus has got within. Homer's epithet for Aphrodite, "laughter loving" alludes to the giddy displacements her power engenders, one of them being the physical, erotic confusion by which Zeus 'begets' her, a type of the overtly horrible confusion by which his father, Kronos began her formation or by which Dionysus 'begets' himself upon Pentheus. The auto-erotic and castrative aspects of the myth suggest a powerful anti-generative or idealizing aspect. So the handmaiden, mistress of the bed and its desires is essential poeisis: the image displaces life by sexual lability and lust. The magical erotic transformation and trauma over which she presides define her nature in

each main mythic source and root them in the highest gods. Ancient Greek religion was a traumatic theurgic poeisis that mocked nature: desire produces sterility not abundance.

The bed is the scene of the primordial rebellion against the god of heaven in the Greek *Theogony*, a site of gender and generational war startlingly resurgent in the era we term postmodern. This term is apt because its emphasis on self-construction and artifice exposes the culture's core dynamics, as does its related insistence on inauthenticity and grand Statist projects imposed in the name of "compassion," a quality denoted by Hyllus as a divine fraud and paraded today by the therapeutic state as it was asserted by inquisitors in centuries past. Similarly Nietzsche associates diplomats, women, actors and poses (*GS* 5.361-8); gestures and slogans to be seen not understood. But Hyllus' remark, at the end of the drama came six centuries before the stirrings of the Greco-Roman project to suppress and appropriate Judaism into a new dispensation whose ideological terrors, in the veil of professed compassion, in an aura of 'renovated' ancient truth, could absorb and dominate all cults. Its pagan fudging of the matter of the bed chamber (disguising the sex and violence), its eventual emphasis on chastity concomitant with an increasing veneration for "the Queen of Heaven" (climaxing in the dogma of the "Immaculate Conception" just as the West began to bring forth Symbolism) indicates that the cultural graft was unstable and that the Hellenic fork disbranch, disfigure, repeatedly attack and disentwine from its Jewish root, generating an infinite regress of refracted fictions of violent eroticism presenting an alternate, compelling world: a virtual reality of dazzling imagery concentrated in the myriad spectacles of the electronic age, the global *theatron* tending, inexorably to Caesarism and Dionysian collapse (*GS* 1.23; *TSZ* "On the New Idol") in a cold pastoral of visual erotics. Some may be having fun but the fission and terrors proceed. One might well counsel, "as little State as possible" and avoid the apocalypse and elegant elegiac ruin of poiesis (*TD* 179 in *TPN* 82-3) of our culture of terror.

Eros – Aphrodite is a beast that goads to horror. Her drama demands the bed as site, exposing its origin. Hence *Women of Trachis* is at the core of the Hellenic material in the West, perhaps at the juncture of poiesis and meiosis, and its immense, transformative and disintegrative power. The fire of the play's final apocalyptic image feeds on blood like the shades in Hades and communion of the faithful in mystical rapture. The demonic and tragic union of the characters in desire's venom was transformed into the ostensibly comedic union of the Eucharist, a cultural cleansing and idealization that steadily loses its suasion even as it proliferates electronic forms in the vulgate.

Haunted by Aphrodite as well as Hera, Herakles sends Iole ahead like RNA that will bind him to Centaur and Hydra. Deianeira shares her concerns with the Chorus and cries out for sympathy in the "sickness" from which they all suffer:

> So now the two of us lie under one sheet waiting for his embrace…when he is sick, as he so often is with this same sickness, I am incapable of anger. But to live in the same house with her, to share the same marriage…I am afraid that he may be called my husband but be the younger woman's man. (WT 539-51)

Deianeira is anguished but not enraged; after all, Herakles saved her from the centaur when she was his newly betrothed wife; still earlier he had saved her from Achelous, figure of the turbulent erotic core of metamorphosis. She learned the terror of Aphrodite-Eros when she was a maiden and "conceived an agonizing fear of marriage" not because of any unnatural aversion; on the contrary, because the grotesque, violent metamorphoses the Hellenes understood as love came to her as a monstrously protean potential husband:

> For my suitor was the river Achelous
> Who used to come and ask my father for my hand,
> Taking three forms – first, clearly a bull, and then
> A serpent with shimmering coils, then a man's body
> But a bull's face…and in my unhappiness I constantly prayed for death
> Before I should ever come to his marriage bed! (WT 7-17)

But to her "joy there came the famous Herakles, son of Alcmene and Zeus" perhaps as part of his ridding Hellas from "beasts" perhaps because the beast of passion drove him to the maiden, — the material suggests it will be one beast or another: desire will have its way and will not be fulfilled until it burns the blood and flesh of the humans it possesses and consumes. The entire tragedy suggests that one cannot disentangle eros from beasts for Herakles is enmeshed in both: in fighting beasts he fights the poison in himself that at length must be burned out in the hot, lethal communion that links all the key players. The Hellenes saw a cosmos driven by Eros and consisting of beasts fighting in tangled erotic unions as if Aphrodite was the other face of the hydra. Greek image-work is thus a celebration of the thrilling horror of generative energy; again the id of identity. Its protean nature appears in the ninth labor when Herakles is sent to take the "belt" from the Amazon, Hippolyta ("unbridled mare") whose nature figures in shaping the identity and doom of Hippolytus, unbridled in his rejection of Aphrodite and at length bridled in the reins of death that assert his name and fate.

While she watched the battle for her maidenhood, Deianeira sank, "overwhelmed with terror" but then rejoiced for "Zeus of the contests made the end good, *if* it has been good" (WT 24-6). In the fear and doubt of her conditional is the irony that haunts and finally overwhelms the play. When the chorus recounts the initial battle, beginning by affirming "how strong is the victory the Cyprian goddess always wins," they remind us that part of the ancestry of Herakles is in Bacchic Thebes, site of myriad possessions, pollution and breaking of social roles. They remind us, too that the contest between the metamorphic river god and the hero was refereed by Aphrodite herself, in short that from the outset there was no escape from the tragedy of lust and trauma of the marriage bed. The bond of Odysseus and Penelope is an exception to a literature – mythos in which Helen and Paris, Jason and Medea, Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Semele and Zeus, even Dionysus and Pentheus are closer to the norm of sexual compulsion and human sacrifice.

As an example of this confusion of identity and boundaries, when the Chorus speaks in regard to Lichas's equivocations, they also refer implicitly to Nessus and Herakles (351-68):

Damn all scoundrels, but damn him most of all
Who practices a secret, degrading villainy [383-4]

By implication of the action, themes and vocabulary ("secret") Aphrodite and Hera are included in the circle of degradation and eventual ruin. Iole too is included as the source of Herakles' assault on Oechalia and as the "secret enemy" of Deianira (376). Thus, even marginal comments reinforce the circuit of venom unifying the drama: "strong is the victory the Cyprian goddess always wins" (498). The "contorted grappling" and "groaning on both sides" when Herakles fought Achelous also images back the matter of "love's bed" (508-22). Wrestling was an erotic, dialectic and athletic term.

The aesthetic products of ancient Hellas did not propose in the Western sense to utterly transform and sanitize demonic material. That was the project for which Hellenism via late Roman heterodoxy appropriated Jewish material and launched a mystery of salvation in the spirit, leaving behind the body they saw as hopelessly corrupt. They developed a new queen of heaven, a powerful but peaceful Athena, miraculously conceived and blended with a beautiful and loving but not lustful, indeed a chaste, Aphrodite, merciful in the Jewish pattern (the root of the Hebrew "merciful," *rachum* is "womb," *rechem*), not merciless as in the Greek. The resulting hybrid was a compelling composite whose ambiguities and core energy may be seen in works like Bernini's "St Theresa" or in the tension between the name and act of Madonna. These taut contradictions form our beings and shape our deeds.

Sophocles keeps at the margins of his play the sojourn of Herakles in Lydia, as a cross-dressing slave of the 'barbarian' Queen, Omphale of the interesting name, but its theme of sexual passion and confusion (WT 70-2, 248-54, 432-3; see Apollodorus and Lucian "Dialogs of the gods") flows into the mainstream of the action that begins with the surging tri-form Achelous, carries into the persistent surging of the Hydra's venom, of the centaur's lust and hatred and the substantively similar desires of Herakles, Dejanira and Iole all goaded by Aphrodite. It is fate, the order of things: "her own beauty has destroyed her…against her will" (434). The thematic and ontological centrality of the battle with the protean and terrifying Achelous attests the supremacy of Aphrodite and the possession that is her power and that of Dionysus, like Herakles a son of Zeus and vector of erotic frenzy and transformations of identity and substance:

One was a strong river with the look of a high-horned bull…
The other came from the Thebes of Bacchus, the son of Zeus.
They came together then, in the middle, desiring her bed.
Alone in the middle with them, their referee,
Cypris, goddess of love's bed… (506-16, emphasis added)

Aphrodite, the result and embodiment of love's "contorted grappling" is in her element, amid the waters, mediating changes. Then Deianira learns definitively what has delayed Herakles to the time appointed by the prophecies:

For the sake of this girl Herakles destroyed Eurytus…it was
Love alone who bewitched him into this violence –
Not his laborious service in Lydia for Omphale…

It was Love…to give him the child for his secret bed...
And has sent her here, and not to be a slave. (WT 352-67, emphasis added)

She understands; it is the "sickness" of Love "that rules even the gods," and her too. She accepts and remembers the Centaur's gift and the magical garment she wove to bring her joy through the power of Aphrodite, a secret charm in service to the silent handmaiden. "Send for the lady to the Sagittary… it is something from Cyprus, a business of some heat" (*Othello* 1.3.135; 1.2.46-7 passim). A hyper-trope, a centaur figures commingling.

So in words that Shakespeare echoes in Laertes' "I bought an unction of a mountebank" Deianeira explains that she long has kept "hidden in a copper urn…a gift of a centaur…hairy-chested Nessus as he was dying" (*Hamlet* 4.7.141-8; *WT* 551-8). The beau ideal of Laertes exposes his character and draws on the Greek archetype: Lamord, death as a centaur, "incorpsed and demi-natured with his beast." So too in Sophocles, the gift of the beast carries lust and revenge; when Nessus, carrying Deianeira across a flooded river, "touched her lustfully," Herakles shot him, a reflex of the lustful touch. The arrow was tipped with the Hydra's blood. The liminality of the river crossing was picked up by Dante and the "bellowing of a bull" is an archetype reaching from the doom of Oedipus and Hippolytus to Picasso's Minotauromachy series. The "high-horned bull" surging in metamorphic rapine and the "filly of Oechalia" keep the paradigm at the edges of this spectacle of erotic contest and death.

"If you listen to me you will have great profit," Nessus, trope of lust and poiesis told her, providing a version of the "deceits" of Aphrodite. "Take in your hands this blood, clotted in my wounds" with the poison of the Hydra "and you will have a charm over the heart of Herakles so that he will never look at another woman and love her more than you." This is "the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth" (*Macbeth* 5.5.43-4). The maiden followed his "lie like truth," his fiction and later sends the "long fine-woven robe" to Herakles for him to don when he "stands, conspicuous before all" an emblem of ironic piety (*WT* 568-613). The sentence may have been echoed by Euripides in the scene when Dionysus, lord of the city from which Herakles derived, charms Pentheus with treacherous words and a long dress for a transfigurative passion in which he too will be an emblem of theurgic poeisis and its doubling (*The Bacchae* 811-40, 912-58). Dionysus initiates his cousin Pentheus making him his sacrificial double; the double of Herakles is the beast he slays, becomes and is slain by.

The key points for this study are the pervasive horrors of metamorphosis and the presentation of Herakles as their emblem, not idealized but an image such as the Symbolists might have used: the great hero, the killer of beasts killed by the beast in circumstances when his inner beast exposes its own "murderous confusion," the words of Nessus also being an apt epithet for Cyprian Aphrodite, the "modest lovely goddess": This phrase perhaps more than any epitomizes the irony, dissembling and horror at the core of the West's cult of aesthetics and romantic love.

The surging poison of desire that unites all the players in this traumatic tetrad recalls the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Gnosticism and the 'orthodox' cult that absorbed

it in the focus on magic transmission of knowledge as communal fluid: Jesus said, `I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become drunk from the bubbling stream which I have measured out.... He who will drink from my mouth will become as I am: I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him" (Nag Hammadi, *GT* 35, 50). Demonic possession and mystical union are constants from the ancient world but the sexual aspects, once acknowledged openly and embodied in the "Cyprian goddess" became dissembled, esoteric, aesthetic and perhaps even farther from rationality. Gnosticism is a coyly flaunted, artful denial of erotic matter. During church formation, Gnostic matter suppressed Hebraic and the trend accelerates.

Too late Deianeira thinks to ask, "this same poison which seeped black and bloody from the wounds of Nessus, how can it fail to kill Herakles, too?" The love charm may be lethal as lust is lethal in this drama of Hellenic poiesis. "It is precisely from the vile and repulsive that the most potent magic comes" Jameson suggests, succinctly stating the trajectory of the image project: from the wasteland to heal and restore it with magic and artifice that leads back to a wasteland. The Parthenon and Greek drama give beautiful form to the horror of the bed they reveal; the statue of the virgin redeemer fronts the passion of the whore and Dionysian, the magic circle of poeisis, Circe's mirror and wine. Sophocles knew the charm of art did not work without poison: the dogma of "pure love" was a self-consuming fraud at Camelot and its ensuing cultural shadows: "the "British invasion" and chant "all you need is love" and so "the fair maid of Astolat" dies for her love, as do thousands of knights and eventually the realm. Pushing these cultural poetics is the force of Aphrodite, the thing itself. Her glamorous veneer became even more perversely confused in the chivalry of the Christian era, as Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* and Tennyson's disastrous tournaments repeatedly suggest; a panoply of "lost innocents" that destroys Camelot and exposes the link between goddess worship and the culture-disintegrating desire it encodes. The epitome of Romance and chivalry, the Grail myth, highlights the unnatural confusion of the Christ-cult: "the Glorious Father who made his daughter his mother" (Chretien, 386, 420, 424, 469, inter alia). As in *the Women of Trachis* and Hesiod, confusions of identity center on the marital bed which the church both exalts and negates, transforming it into symbol and fiction, into erasure (or degradation) of the father by the beast-god till he is a specter, a "dearth father."

The confusions of romance, of magical Eros climax when Dejanira hears from her son that the embrace of her robe is killing the husband whose love, and lust, she meant to secure; that he writhes

> Groaning again and again, damning the mismating
> In your wretched bed, the whole marriage that he
> Had won… (WT 791-3)

Similarly there was "groaning on both sides" when Herakles battled Achelous with "Cypris, goddess of love's bed in the middle with them, their referee" (514-22). The marital bed is the core of transformations; its magic intrinsic to poiesis and death. Thus

seeing that "she had done unwittingly the will of the beast" she goes "rushing into the bedchamber of Herakles…casting sheets and spreading them upon the bed of

Herakles…and sat there in the middle of her marriage bed" weeping "torrents of hot tears" and crying, "O my bed, oh my bridal chamber, farewell…"(913-35, emphases added).

This horror led Hellenists to banish a real bridal chamber from their new cult while retaining the Queen of Heaven motif and its displacement of the father. The Gnostics carried forward this pattern with their hatred of "the Demiurge" they also called *Saklas* (the Fool). Their asceticism and hatred of the body that decays and suffers (hence cremation, not burial for matter's wreck must be consumed by the blaze of imagery) was present in Greek tragedy. Centuries later "many central traditions in Christian theology came as reflections and shadows of its confrontation with the Gnosis" (*the Nag Hammadi Library*; Cecil, *NC* 53-5). For the ancient Hellenes, the material of "love" was real and terrible. Possession and transposition, the stuff of poeisis was not abstract but located in the passions that activated all parts of the physical world and centered on the bed, of gods and humans alike. Like Dionysus, it was essentially transgressive, as in the tale of Cinyras and Myrhha, and magical, as for Iphis and Ianthe. Later, metamorphosis became an ideological ideal and theological dogma of transfiguration and mystical communion. Perhaps it is but a small overstatement that "aesthetics is nothing but a kind of applied physiology" (Nietzsche *TPN* 664), a process of splitting, doubling and idealization.

The bed is the site of the demon lover's possession of Christabel, the site where the maniac in "Julian and Maddalo" was ruined by the curses and scorn of his former beloved; the de facto site where Usher's sister-spirit and identical, Madeline re-claimed him to consummate the morbidity of their family's art cult with its emphasis on "the intricacies" (modulations, transformations) of music. The bed is the site of the erotic triumphs, pride and lament of Millay: initially, the site where Gaia and Kronos planned the deed that construed Aphrodite whom Sophocles, drawing on his culture's transformative sensibility presents as the beast of beasts, a meta-figure of erotic deceit whose essence links all the beasts of the Herakles myth in one horrible communion that inverts and refracts, through idyll, apocalypse and elegy, his quest (a pattern also seen in Euripides' treatment of the myth). The poison of Nessus, the poison of the Hydra and the 'poison' of Herakles that comes from Cyprian Aphrodite returns in the robe of his wife, woven so that she could secure for herself the "sickness," the transformative compulsion of Aphrodite's liminal image-work. This is the root of the West's all consuming emphasis on "love" sanitized by transposing to itself the life-giving love of the "compassionate Father" (*Av HaRachaman*) of Judaism, its laws of marital purity (including sexual joy but not with centaurs or bulls, etc) and, perhaps not least, its stance against magic and rites that "capture the eyes and steal the mind" as Maimonides explained in Negative commandment 32; its condemnation of the adulterate and hybrid later explained as the essence of pollution (Mary Douglas 41-57 passim). The adulterate hybrid that is Aphrodite (and her types, the centaur and hydra) is "the filthy thing that eats" Herakles. It is brutally ironic and harshly just. The gods of the Hellenes, in addition to being petty, capricious and cruel also could be strictly, brutally just, the quality with which churches, beginning with the Hellenic Gnostics have slandered and re-defined the Jews and the

Creator. In Judaism He is defined as a merciful G-d. "Merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, and great in loving-kindness and truth; preserver of kindness for thousands of generations; Forgiver of iniquity, willful sin and mistakes and who cleanses…" (Exodus 34:5-7, Numbers 14:17-18, etc). Compassion and salvation are not instantaneous, not by magic tricks because 'He' presides over a world of laws and meaning, a world where human actions, thoughts and words have consequences which teach science, habits of responsibility and reassure even those in pain with the logic of creation. There are no hydras, centaurs or maenads in this world, no river gods, Aphrodite and Artemis; deities do not duel using human puppets to settle their quarrels; Hera does not avenge on humans the liaisons of Zeus with "the daughters of man" (Genesis 6:2-4). The queen of heaven, polytheism or image cult, all related, Judaism proscribes as soul and society-corroding fictions (e.g. Jeremiah 44:15-26).

"These Greeks have a lot on their conscience, — falsification was their true trade; the whole of European psychology is sick with Greek superficiality" (Nietzsche *TPN* 454-5) or one would say, sick with the idealization of raw or hybrid cultural matter whose glorious image inevitably collapses as Sophocles displays in *WT*; as the gods themselves at last collapse; apocalypse and elegy are the future of all illusion, all theurgic poiesis, not least that of the State, "the cold monster" that thrives on illusion and contrived apocalypse in an era when "lying is a universal principle" (Nietzsche *TPN* 160-3).

"O ungrateful Greeks," Herakles cries in his anguish, "Where are you for whom I destroyed myself, purging so many beasts" (1011-12). We have noted the irony in this assertion: the hero carries the poison of his quest and of his foes, the magical changes and, at last the drive for purity by fire, erasing desire by boosting its heat to glorious incandescence. The Greeks strove to master the trauma and nightmares of the erotic-metamorphic drive in poeisis by burning in its dazzling glare. In medieval terms derived from this process: the image quest arises from the savagery of the Wasteland and, after dazzling in prismatic colors around its god-king, descends to ruin and flight from the world via the "black ship" paradigm. The magical violence of Greek myth and its successor-culture surges toward the cleansed and perfect artifice: the blood contained in the bejeweled cup or dripping from the spear tip; the possessed host (Israel, ironically, and later his trope), a disguised paradigm of image-work; a god-man who is entirely pure, uncontaminated by seed which in Judaism is holy but which the Greeks associated with gender war, lust, monsters and poison: "a savage, unapproachable sickness" (*WT* 1030). As if to emphasize the cultural divide, Herakles calls for "the beneficial fire" and the last demand and project of his labors is to command his son and best friend, Philoctetes to build and place him on it. To Judaism cremation is forbidden though it was the main means of the purists of the third Reich, the social epitome of the image-project and its appropriations of the original host. The last stage of its petrifaction takes geopolitical and economic forms that sell purity as fake peace (the erasure of Israel, the burial of the genuine original by the imperial fraud). This occurs amid the pervasive and mundane pollution of the mass media's glare and false fire, a sankgreall on the cheap that will end as badly, or worse, than the Grail Quest did in Tennyson's Camelot. The

illusion will collapse onto the enervated culture that projected it as a substitute for memory. "And of this stuff, the car's creative ray cast all the busy phantoms that were there, as the sun shapes the clouds…mask after mask fell from the form and countenance of all" (Shelley 519-20). The apocalyptic and elegiac phases of this disillusionment have pervaded pop culture, finance, economics and geopolitics.

In a point we will return to in Part II of this essay, note that Herakles was sold to Omphale because his host, Eurytus mocked his archery, claiming his own sons were superior. Herakles threw one of them, Iphitis from a cliff. For this act, "Olympian Zeus had him sold and sent out of the country" to Lydia and three years of slavery embodied in gender reversal, a very literal poiesis and the gist of Aphrodite who rules this play's main themes and subordinate narratives (WT 248-80 contrast 355, supra). The bow of Herakles was mocked prompting murder and re-doubled mockery via gender reversal: imitation is a form of doubling as by a distorted mirror. His bow and his archery saved Deianeira and killed the Centaur who later would kill them both through "murderous confusion" of his bow, a type of what he suffered with Omphale. Mockery of his bow is a transfigurative trope and centers the trauma of poeisis and its shifty erotic essence. Though it was not the explicit reason he sacked Oechalia ("Love alone bewitched him to this violence") it was the symbol of his virility by which he took Iole, prompting Deianira to send the robe envenomed with the matter from his arrows. Finally, it is his friend, the hero and great archer, Philoctetes that lights his pyre, a death for which he too, also poisoned by a snake, will scream. Apollo, successor to and absorber of Pythian powers is lord of the lyre and bow; doubling, it both heals and kills. He also was the 'tutor,' implicitly the *erastes* of Orpheus. So Orpheus, embodiment of threshold crossing and martyr of image work links to the bloody ambiguities and compulsions of Aphrodite and thus to Herakles and Philoctetes: his songs are their arrows of desire, the trope of imagination intuited by Blake. What Blake did not understand and greatly advanced was the consuming cultural vampirism of image work that, by the Greek paradigm, "makes a woman" of culture and man and invests eros in the drive to idealize. The trauma of the silent handmaiden unites the Greek heroes in forms of sexual confusion and martyrdom. The transformative elements in the story show that Apollo is not the antithesis but a complement to Dionysus and Aphrodite to whom all forces align. "Love rules even the gods as he pleases, and he rules me."

Part II

The first part of this essay identified *the Women of Trachis* as a tragedy of the marriage bed and, as such, a paradigm of ancient Greek poiesis as embedded in the formation and nature of Aphrodite, "the silent handmaiden" who conquers everyone: "great is the victory the Cyprian goddess always wins" (499). She rules the action from the first, in the midst of the waters of the tri-form shape-changing Achelous as he battles Herakles. I sought to show how events and vocabulary establish a startling congruity between the "modest lovely goddess" and the hydra. Her desire and its venom, the mesmeric, potent and lethal fluid of the id, the dyad of the bed, coition and

even meiosis link Herakles, Nessus, Deianira and Iole in a tetrad of trauma contending around the marriage bed. Part I suggests that this tetrad, an archetypal dramatic structure encloses an effectual dyad in which Nessus is the shadow or inner beast of Herakles and Iole, won by war, as the shadow and potential displacement of the faithful but fearful wife, Deianira. The tetrad telescopes into an erotic dyad and this architecture of characters is balanced and symbolically mirrored by the play's essential sites: the river, the marital bed, the pyre and the mountain-tower of Oechalia, all transformative sites of erotic contention or consummation. Against this symbolic and metaphysical ontology are other startling formations: the bond of Aphrodite and the hydra as sources of surging "sickness," an intriguing dyad in that Aphrodite is "a male in a female hid" or a male (Ouranos) displaced and embodied in a female; and of the de facto and astonishing tetrad of beasts: Herakles, Nessus, the hydra and the Cyprian whose power constrains and borders the lives of the two women, or dual-phased woman, Deianira-Iole, "the filly of Oechalia" destroyed by the "beast with the laughing face," the bull god Dionysus of rapturous and violent transformation. Herakles hails from his town (*WT* 511) and Dionysus, like the ambiguous Omphale shadows the edges of the play. Aphrodite, Dionysus and the archer Apollo, fused in Herakles find a new relationship through this drama and the implication of its themes and idiom. Joining them in a tetrad of deities that use human beings is the "defender" or queen of heaven the name of whose "renown" Herakles bears.

The reticulations of the drama show that Herakles and Aphrodite are images of each other in their substance and transformative nature: both are archers (*Hippolytus* 530-2, the "arrows of desire" trope is ancient); Herakles bears the vengeful labors of the Queen and Aphrodite incorporates and disseminates in her honey ("like a bee she flits") the potency of the King, Ouranos, the original and incestuous dyad of the culture of metamorphic possession, displacement and death, of a divine-beast's idealized image and its consumed host. To adduce Nietzsche's remark that aesthetics projects physiology, these two great figures become tropes of the zygote and meiosis splitting and consuming Herakles to produce the dyad of a younger generation, Hyllus-Iole whose splitting need not be detailed in part because it is weaker and traumatized by the archetype and paradigm.

In a point we will return to below, note that Herakles was sold to Omphale because his host, Eurytus mocked his archery, claiming his own sons were superior. Herakles threw one of them, Iphitis from a cliff. For this act, "Olympian Zeus had him sold and sent out of the country" to Lydia and three years of slavery embodied in gender reversal, a literal poiesis and the gist of Aphrodite who rules this play's main themes and subordinate narratives (*WT* 248-80 contrast 355, supra). The challenge to identity, rebuffed, prompts an inversion of identity. The bow of Herakles was mocked prompting murder and re-doubled mockery via gender reversal: imitation is a form of doubling as by a distorted mirror. His bow and his archery saved Deianeira and killed the Centaur who later would kill them both through "murderous confusion" of desire and bow, a type of what he suffered with Omphale. Mockery of his bow is a transfigurative trope

and centers the trauma of poeisis and its shifty erotic essence. As his identity and desire, it was the implicit if not explicit reason he sacked Oechalia ("Love alone bewitched him to this violence"); it was the symbol of virility by which he took Iole, prompting Deianira to send the robe envenomed with the matter from his arrows. Extending the tropes, his friend, the hero and great archer, Philoctetes receives the bow and venomous bite of a god-snake and screams for a similar fiery death, a death he suffers in life. Apollo, successor to and absorber of Pythian powers is lord of the lyre and bow, both to heal and kill. He also was the 'tutor,' implicitly the *erastes* of Orpheus. So Orpheus, embodiment of threshold crossing and martyr of image-work links to the bloody ambiguities and compulsions of Aphrodite, Apollo and thus to Herakles and Philoctetes (Humphries 216; in Ovid, the pyre is made and the bow and quiver taken directly by Philoctetes): his songs are their arrows of desire, the trope of imagination intuited by Blake. What Blake did not understand, though he greatly advanced it, was the consuming cultural vampirism of image work that, by the Greek paradigm, "makes a woman" of culture and man and invests eros in the drive to idealize. Thus the trauma of the silent handmaiden as elaborated by Sophocles unites key figures of Greek myth in forms of sexual confusion and martyrdom. The play shows how the mythos of glorious death and eros are embedded in the West. The transformative elements in the story show that Apollo is not the antithesis but a complement to Dionysus and Aphrodite to whom all forces align. "Love rules even the gods as he pleases…" Their theurgy is the vampiric shadow that consumes its source, the mockery that the image reflects on its hosts and generators.

The drama's primary tetrad of traumatic pollution: Iole- Herakles – Deianira – Nessus is a vehicle for Aphrodite who enters through each vector, — with the hydra her obverse or even the bestial version of her demonic beauty. One could speak of a triad, Herakles – Deianeira – Nessus, the last being the 'dark' form or specter of Herakles that forms the main conflict and suffer her "sickness." In his contention for Deianira Nessus doubles Achelous and his poison is one face of a beast that includes the hydra and Aphrodite (though it may be a topos, both Achelous and the hydra are "shimmering"). Most basically, one discerns the dyad of the marriage bed as the core generator of trauma and image-work with Iole doubling Deianira ("the two of us under one sheet") and Nessus, Herakles. As a centaur, Nessus exposes the handmaiden's ambiguous, perverse inner form: his "treacherous words" that create "murderous confusion" replicate the manner of her magical 'birth' with its paradoxical "penalties and pleasures" as Homer writes; her "deceptions and sweetnesses" (Hesiod 205-6). Born from generative act despoiled in a bed of horror, her power drives further carnage, reflecting the terrible paradox of the play and, with Nessus, re-producing the horror of the primal 'divine' bed of the *Theogony* in that of Herakles and Deianira. Transformed into 'a woman' by agony (1075), Herakles becomes a trope of Orpheus and the apocalyptic separation of the image from its mortal core, begging Hyllus, "cut away my head from my miserable body" (1014-15) evoking myriad Symbolist paintings, mockeries of a culture "sick with desire," confused by its hybrid nature and entranced by the 'authenticity' and raw eros of regression. The Sphinx was their icon – inner core.

Speaking of monsters and double vision, before explicating the play further it is instructive to look at how differently Ovid handles the account of the transfiguration and ascension of Herakles stressing not the demonic horror and ambiguities of image-work but its idealizing phase. Ovid presents a sanitized form of the myth, emphasizing the idyllic and elegiac while moderating the apocalyptic horror rooted in the human dynamics. The physical torment of the poison, emphasized in Sophocles becomes an indictment of Juno that serves mainly to summarize the labors. Ovid lets Achelous and Nessus relate much of the agon (Humphries 209-10; 212-13, "which would you rather be," Achelous asks Hercules, "a liar or a bastard") while the gods (except for Juno) presented by Ovid's own narrative are figures of pity. This is part of the sublimation that eventually produced the Church. It also results from Ovid writing four hundred and twenty-five years after Sophocles and showing significant familiarity with Jewish material which was not uncommon for Romans in his times (P. Schafer; M. Williams).

Zeus, called by Ovid "Jove" per Roman custom (perhaps a Latinized corruption of the Tetragrammaton), is very different from the remote, mute observer of his son's torment and grandson's prayers as portrayed by Sophocles. In Ovid's tale, "Hercules, Nessus, and Deianeira" Philoctetes, the great archer lights the pyre and receives the arms that will take Troy (see also Grene 252-4). But the significant difference lies in the attitude and intervention of Jove as he mandates the transformation of Hercules, his son and seed into an immortal spirit, a god among the gods.

> …and the gods were troubled for earth's champion.
> As Jove with joyful voice addressed them: 'Gods,
> This fear of yours delights my heart…
> that your favor guards my son.
> He has earned that favor by his deeds, and I
> Am under obligation for that favor… Only his mother's heritage,
> His mortal part will feel the fire; that part
> Which comes from me no flames will ever master,
> It will live always, safe from death and burning
> And I shall take it to the shores of Heaven.. (Metamorphoses IX, Humphries 216-17)

One notes the joyful mood of Jove in mediating the passage from life to immortal life, an implicit rejection of life for eternity that the Church carried forward from the Greeks. Per the link, cremation is the means of triumph. Flame is the element of images and the spectacle, as Yeats ("Byzantium") understood. It symbolizes the superhuman discharge of energy that displaces the human, "life in death" being the obverse of "death in life," the horrible 'gift' of the Greek pantheon which Ovid prettifies and which the heroes of classical tragedy suffer. For him the gods are still plural, an assembly of superheroes of whom Jove is chief but unlike the Zeus of Euripides, they are concerned for mankind, at least the greatest among them is. Similarly, Seleucid and Roman emperors proclaimed themselves to be "friends" and "saviors" of mankind on their coins, adopting titles like "Soter" ("savior"), "Theos" ("god"), or Epiphanes ("god manifest": Antiochus I *Soter*, 281-61 bce; Antiochus II *Theos*, 261-46; Seleucus III *Soter* 225-21; Antiochus

Epiphanes, 175-64 bce). The Alexandrian age was a watershed for the passage from classical apocalypse to late Hellenistic idylls and a sweetening of the eidolon which later emerged in claims of absolute mercy and an ability to affirm faith by declaration alone, a kind of lyric assertion of deity.

This study's concern is the transmutation of Herakles from suffering and flawed hero to demi-god. But in Ovid Herakles is not flawed; there is no mention of his lusts, no Omphale (whom might have been expected to interest Ovid); no symbolic relation to hydra or centaur though the latter is mentioned and Nessus has his own piece of narrative. Nessus is the bad guy; Iole appears only via "Rumor the tattletale, who makes big things out of little ones," disturbing Deianeira and setting the tragic wheel rolling as she sends off the envenomed robe. The desire of Herakles for Iole becomes doubtful; Deianira a foolish woman who "gives way to tears" and self-pity rather than a clear-eyed confronter of the power of the goddess and the erotic power whose "sickness" her husband shares with most mortals. The pathos of the marriage bed as a trope for poiesis and its traumatic changes is elided. The demonic matter closely linked to the liminal bed of death and sex is absent. The role of Aphrodite, repeatedly emphasized in Sophocles, indeed that rules the action does not appear, surprising in a work that contains "Venus and Adonis" and myriad examples of love natural and unnatural. Ovid's emphasis rather is on the transformation of Herakles from struggling savior into a star above the storm, "a proof of Jove" as if he was a photographic print, an etching or image of the god, a perfect reflection and type of his father for idealization here works both axes of human-divine. The basis for a later cult of aesthetics that fuses father and son, preparing the former's displacement is being laid. After the pyre consumes the poisoned flesh,

> There was nothing left, a form,
> A shape, not to be recognized, of Hercules,
> With nothing human about it, only spirit,
> The proof of Jove, shining… and Jove raised him
> Through hollow clouds to the bright stars… (Metamorphoses IX)

So Hercules returns to his father. One thinks of Yeats' lines in "Byzantium" citing "images that yet fresh images beget" leaving behind "the fury and the mire of human veins" the obverse of how the falcon leaves the falconer: a splitting of nature and artifice, or of natural and human by radical idealizing whose complement is regression. Yeats' form of magike-tekne's apocalypse is figured in the ambiguity of the slouching sphinx, a demonic image detached from and stalking the human, ready to consume whatever survived the drowning of the "ceremony of innocence" itself an idealization ready, like Christabel for possession, displacement and degradation ("the Second Coming"). Yeats' myth-making and fascination with iconic power was akin to the syncretic, boundary-effacing mythologies of late classical times as, in the Greco-Roman world, apocalypse gave way to idyll, romance and elegy as forms of its passion play. His rather strained infatuation with apocalypse and the "life-in-death" of images, a development from first generation Symbolism, epitomized the century from which he emerged and the one he helped form.

In Ovid the Orphic project appears in pure form: the composite hero, half man, half god, an ambiguous and unstable substance has been idealized into spirit, an image of Jove to dwell among the stars, a prototype for Shelley's "splendors of the firmament of time" ("Adonais" 388-90 passim) or simply part of a Greek-derived Western archetype. More broadly, the glimmerings of the construction of the West appear via Ovid's borrowings from neo-Platonism, Jewish ontology and account of the creation in the space – time unity that Ovid adopts at the very beginning of his work, a vision of earth filled with "rivers of milk and honey" (Humphries 6), the famous description of the promised Land that recurs as a leitmotif in the Books of Moses.

It is instructive to compare Ovid's close tracking of Genesis to the account of Hesiod, six centuries earlier that shows some borrowings from Torah confused with several versions of genesis via anthropomorphic beings and various magical births.

Ovid begins his compendium of Greek material, *Metamorphoses* with a strikingly Jewish account of "Creation," the first word and heading of his text. In the beginning, "before ocean was, or earth or heaven, nature was all alike… a shapelessness of rude and lumpy matter… confusion" (Humphries 3, Ovid 1:6-9). The state of total ambiguity and lack of borders is a state that the metamorphic impulse of the Greeks made the substance of their world. It is antithetical to the Hebraic view of creation and life as a process of discrimination and separation into integral objects and beings; a sensibility in which letters (*otiot*) embody a science of causes (etiology, a borrowed term) that also is the basis of math, music and narrative; not the muses' hypnotic enraptured songs but precise articulation from the roots of speech (psalm 19). The creation in Genesis, engraved by letters, an expression of DAN is an implicit negation of the incestuous emphases of Hellenist myth. Confused and rude, lumpy matter is the essence of metamorphosis so at the outset of his work, by his account of beginnings Ovid carries forward Greek material in a blend that foreshadows the hybrid culture that would begin to emerge in the centuries after him, a hybrid whose strains generate increased idealization and burial of the Jewish 'host.'

Echoes and near quotation of the "pre-Socratics, especially Heraclitus and Empedocles are present but these Ovid resolves by adopting a narrative that closely follows Genesis. First he draws on Empedocles, Greek formulator of elemental dialectic to describe the "confusion in which discordant atoms warred" prior to creation:

> Land on which no man could stand and water
> No man could swim in, air no man could breathe,
> Air without light; substance forever changing,
> Forever at war...
> Heat fought with cold, wet fought with dry, the hard
> Fought with the soft, things having weight contended
> With weightless things; (Ovid I: 8-9, 15-21)

For this study, what is most pertinent is that Ovid, amid his paradoxography of magical changes (including the Herakles - Dejanira tale) emphasizes not only the "confusion" of the primordial state and its endless metamorphosis, a Hellenic view

expects in his text, including naming "war" as the animating principle, but elaborates with Jewish content that shows the first European powers absorbing cultural material which would form the West as an art work, an artifice of eternity.

Here are the four elements Empedocles posited but not in the state of original harmony ruled by love (*philia*) but resembling the *tohu va vohu* of Genesis translated into Greek as "chaos" for example by Simplicius, *Physics* 157-9, Fragment B17 and Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* x:15. The Hebrew phrase often translated "empty and void" is shown by Nachmanides to mean "potential was in it," unformed energy, *hyla* before it was made the stuff of creation (Ramban on Genesis I). The dialectic of love and strife (*neikos*) kept everything in turmoil (Empedocles in Fragment B35, B26, Simplicius, *Physics*, 31-4). The emphasis on endless strife amid the confusion sounds more like Heraclitus (or like ancient Greece and Rome) who asserted that war was the essence of all becoming. "Everything flows and nothing abides" Heraclitus said, a doctrine of pervasive metamorphosis that would appeal to Ovid. "Cool things become warm, the warm grows cool; the moist dries, the parched becomes moist" (Heraclitus fragments 91, 126; reflecting this antithesis, Hesiod has Ares and Aphrodite consort to bring forth "Panic and Terror"). More pertinent is his dogma that "war is both father and king of all…war is the common condition, strife is justice and all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife" (fragment 53). This is the essence of ancient Hellas: "the wrath of Achilles" (not to mention savagery) and violent hate of Gaia, Kronos and other gods ("the dogs of war" Homer calls them) join in the sources of all Greek literature: metamorphosis and trauma as in *WT*. Or, rather, the sources are the turbulent chafing at boundaries and drive to transformation that result from erotic trauma and generate theurgic poeisis.

Perhaps surprisingly, Ovid asserts that this warring metamorphosis of disorder lasted

> Till God, or kindlier Nature,
> Settled all argument and separated
> Heaven from earth, water from land, our air
> From the high stratosphere, a liberation
> So things evolved, and out of blind confusion
> Found each its place, bound in eternal order. (Ovid 1:20-5)

This blending of Lucretius with Judaism tracks the Genesis account of a liberating, life-enabling order brought from confusion, particularly the first three days (which, since time is relative to gravity and speed literally are days from the 'point' of creation, "the big bang" while from our perspective the six days are about 16 billion years) [Schroeder].

Ovid is too much the Roman patrician to acknowledge Jewish wisdom (Isaac Newton was a rare exception in such matters), not explicitly at the outset of so Hellenistic a book, so he takes an accommodating view on the Designer "who out of chaos brought order to the universe and gave it division" in verses that sound like he is leaning on Genesis and Psalms (e.g. 104). He relates that "the Lord of all Creation" marked out the boundaries of land and water, "banked the river channels" and created the elements, no

one of which "by the Creator's order held general dominion." He returns to a Heraclitean note: despite the Creator's distinctions, still, the elements "come near tearing the universe apart" as "they brawl and quarrel" like "brothers" in Greek myth. Still, with "these boundaries given" the stars, fish and beasts of the earth are created and take their dwelling place. "But *something else was needed, a finer being…a sage, a ruler, so Man was born, it may be, in God's image*" (Ovid 148-76, emphasis added; Genesis 1:26-30). Nietzsche's comments (*BG & E* 248-51) that the Jews are a seminal and the Greeks a receptive people are apposite to the synthesis Ovid makes. The sequence of living things and above all the creation of man as a sage and ruler "in God's image" clearly borrow from the Hebrew Scriptures. The attack of "the Giants" (he does not write Titans though the analogy is clear, as is the action, "piling Pelion upon Ossa") is from Hesiod and the even more bizarre bringing forth of violent men from the blood of the Giants that fell on earth harks back to the Ouranos myth and the blood bringing Furies from earth, along with Pegasus, a trope of imaginative aspiration and transfiguration, of an image leaving earth or the body. The parallels to the "sons of the powers" being men of violence and "contemptuous of gods" draws from both the Hebraic tradition of the state of violent lawlessness just before the flood and from other sources. Similarly, the Deucalion and Pyrrha story draws a bit from that of Noah and Genesis 2 but the trappings are solidly in the world of Greco-Roman theology and geography: Neptune, Triton, Nereids, Boeotian fields and Mt. Parnassus (Ovid *I:252-456*). The tale is a classic of displacement as one culture assimilates and buries another, as Nessus the specter possessed and consumed Herakles: the dead or culturally moribund consume the living.

This cultural "confusion" and syncretism that characterizes the Greco-Roman or imperial system ironically embeds the Wasteland of "chaos" in the new order Ovid celebrates. It is a pattern repeated throughout the cultural works of the West and here it appears as a sort of preface foreshadowing Victorian pre-modernism as lamented by Arnold and, differently, by Browning, Tennyson and others like Wagner or Khnopff who sought different paths to "purification" and resolution of the problem of a hybrid culture, a way that follows naturally from Luther's last work, "On the Jews." Wagner sought this 'purification,' this idealizing by imagery in the total art work; itself is a grand synthesis of cultural definition. It was a resurgence of the impulse of the West's pagan substrate, culture and the world as art-ideal like Hesiod's *Shield of Herakles*, a paradigm of poeisis that inheres in Chateaubriand's thesis that the truth of Christianity is in the excellence of its aesthetics.

With Hesiod, six centuries earlier than Ovid, confusion about first things is extensive, almost pre-rational. "First of all came Chaos" and after him came Gaia…and Tartaros the foggy pit…and Eros who is love…who breaks the limbs' strength, who in all gods, in all human beings overpowers the intelligence in the breast and all their shrewd planning" (*Theogony* 116-22). Here is the source for "Eros, tyrant of men, the holder of the keys to Aphrodite's dearest inner chamber" with Aphrodite being chief among archers and "destroyers of mortals" (*Hippolytus* 530-42, Esposito 115). Hesiod also states "that from Chaos was born Erebus, the dark and black Night" and then gives

a sequence of beings brought forth from Night (ibid 123-6); the Chaos-Night sequence catches something of Genesis as Thales (634-546 bce), first of the pre-Socratics clearly borrowed the creation sequence: "evening is older than morning"; water ("the deep") precedes land and "of all things the most ancient is God for He is uncreated" (Diogenes Laertius; Plato, "Phaedrus" 245 d1-6 quotes Thales, whose name is formed on a Hebrew root ("dew"), saying "that which is divine has neither beginning nor end"). But Hesiod's focus is on magical transformations, unnatural beings and conflicts. It is not an account of articulation of a soundless scientific precision in nature, inscribed like words (Psalm 19) but "a cult of the untrue" in which one has "the sense of carrying a goddess across a river of becoming" a trope particularly relevant to the poiesis of *WT* (Nietzsche *GS* 163).

The difference set forth in Psalm 19 shows the alternative it presents to Greek poiesis, particularly given the famous metaphor in its midst, "the sun which is like a groom emerging from his bridal chamber; it rejoices like a powerful warrior to run the course" (Danziger 5-6):

> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament tells of His handiwork. Day following day utters speech and night following night declares knowledge. There is no speech and there are no words; their sound is not heard, but their precision goes forth throughout the earth, and their words reach the end of the inhabited world. (19:2-5)

The word, *chaveh* translated as "declares" also means "states" or "pronounces" which emphasizes the stress on soundless articulation; a precise elaboration of architectonic logic, natural law or DNA. From this view of universal order, the basis of the praise (literal translation of the word rendered in English as "psalm," a Hellenization) arises the famous metaphor of the sun as groom or warrior. Distinguishing the Hebraic worldview is the orderly, phonetic and linguistic structure of creation and the refusal to let a vivid metaphor achieve hypostasis and become an object of veneration. The Tehillim ("psalm") emphasizes this point by turning from its depiction of the sun's magnificent circuit and heat to praise of the Torah, the articulating words of the Creator embodied in the heavens. Nothing escapes the sun's heat; nothing and no one escape Aphrodite but the latter, with Eros the force channeled through her, is a magical being that rules human beings amid a world subject to shattering and irrational transformations. These antithetical viewpoints, the creation of eidolon and prohibition of such worship were fused to assemble the West giving it, along with the core Hellenic emphasis on transmutation, displacement, perhaps denial the fissionable quality that has generated its dynamism and set it, a cultural poiesis on the path from idyll (fiction, illusion) to apocalypse and elegy.

These magical emphases dominate Hesiod, so different than the Hebrew material that Ovid partly accommodates. Gaia takes the creative role as in some postmodern theory. In one of his several creation sequences, Hesiod makes Night and Eros co-eternal to Gaia who both brings forth Ouranos, "without any act of love" and takes him as a husband with consequences essential to discussion of *the Woman of Trachis*. The

members (Aphrodite) and blood (Furies and Giants) of Ouranos also are represented as creative powers; so too the blood of Medusa which brings forth Geryon a monster Dante wrote into his epic as an embodiment of violence (*Inferno*, cantos 16-17; on Nessus 12-17). Together Gaia, earth, and Ouranos, "the starry heavens" generate by coitus the Titans including Kronos. Hesiod's confusion, a precursor of the confusions in WT reflects a sensibility immersed in magical metamorphoses. The trauma that its instability induces brims in his lengthy invocation of the Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne whom he extols and asks to sing through him. Again, the human is a vehicle for fiction and the creation of fictions which he presents as theurgy. In Sophocles, the god-work is lethal.

The ultimate truth for Herakles in *the Women of Trachis* lies in the fiction, Cyprian Aphrodite onto whose powers human beings project their desires and surrender their will. The confusion of integral self with the flux of impulse, sensation and emotion combining in a culture of traumatic transfiguration is expiated in brutal fashion that severs the gods, who are deeply involved in the pollution, from any claim to moral or natural order. Greek idein and magike tekne are not a "science of causes," of letters engraved as DNA in the articulate, purposeful substance of creation. Rather, the play shows us a culture destroying itself by its commitment to myths of traumatic eroticism and resulting unnatural metamorphoses that a stoic heroism can only endure by paradox, as "an unwanted, welcome task" like life itself. The centaurs and Geryon, punishers of self-destruction were aptly chosen by Dante from the blood of Greece's primal scene and its ensuing poison, not least that of lust's "sickness." Their realm is one of self-poisoned blood and fire, the dominant facts and motif in Sophocles as they are in *Agamemnon* also a tragedy of the marital bed with its tetrad of personae enmeshed in violence and sweet deceptions. Like them, Herakles rules and suffers the brutish violence he fought. In this respect, he is, like Geryon and the Centaurs, a result of primal erotic traumas embodying violent fraud not of his own volition but of impulse: in this way he is god-like. His connection to the realm of beasts is vivid in his last words: "set a steel bit in my mouth, hold back the shriek, and make an end of this unwanted, welcome task" (1261-3), the words summing up his entire life of glory. But his agony conducts, via inquiry to that deeper cultural level, as Geryon, amid "fire and wailings" conducted Dante to the eighth circle with "everything lost to sight except the beast" whose portrait emphasizes the twinned motifs of hidden poison and arrows (*Inferno* 17:113-22). In Hesiod, Herakles slays Geryon, grandson of the blood of Medusa (a typological cousin of Aphrodite and Pegasus, blood unlocks poeisis) which ramifies the self-destructive aspects of the mythic material (*Theogony* 280-300). Hera "nourished" the Lernaen hydra and Geryon's sister, Echidna bore Cerberus that Herakles dragged from the underworld (ibid 304-19 cf. Ovid 9.185)). Sophocles builds this mesh of allusions into dramatic ironies: the final agonies and immolation of Herakles are forms of suicide and murder, the apocalyptic pattern and trajectory of the Hellenic bases of the West, the culture and self-splitting idealizations that lead to the Wasteland.

The anagnorisis of *Women of Trachis* is the revelation of a series of paradoxes all of them rooted in and prefigured by the primal crime of the Greek pantheon, the

dismembering of Ouranos and the embodiment of his members into Aphrodite who rules this drama about the horrors of the marriage bed. "It lunges, lunges again, the vile thing is destroying me" Herakles shouts in his pain: he might as well, like Hippolytus (*H* 106-13), be condemning the goddess. The beautiful merges with the horrible: the divine with the beast. Sophocles already has told us that the "sickness" is sent by Aphrodite. Thus, the horrible "lunge" of "the vile thing" connotes the hydra, sexual desire and even the phallus that Aphrodite, and Omphale whom Herakles served, embodies (*WT* 1038-40, 446). This demonic, bisexual substrate doubles the irony in the hero's raging against his wife and women, before he knows how his own desire is implicated:

> Not all
> The lands I came to purify could ever do this.
> A woman, a female, in no way like a man,
> She alone, even without a sword has brought me down. (1060-3)

The chorus knows how true this is and that the "woman" is not mortal. The poison, sickness, lunging and surging is in the purification, within his relation to the gods as emphasized when his sacrificial offering causes the robe to melt into his flesh. In his war against the beasts, the bed is protected, for a moment but its "murderous confusion" is multiplied to Hera's "glory" whose true horror he embodies. Herakles, like the gods whose vector he is becomes the image of the beast, the tormented hero absorbed in the matter he would purify as Marlow becomes absorbed in the "gorgeous eloquence" of Kurtz. Similar is the tragic error of Deianeira, both selfish and true to marriage. "When he is sick, as he so often is, with this same sickness" she says, "I am incapable of anger." So "in all that she did wrong, she had intended good" for like Herakles, ruled by Cyprian Aphrodite, "she had done unwittingly the will of the beast" and expiates her error by the final passion of her marriage bed, dedicated to the same "silent handmaiden," exposing her left side for the eviscerating blow (1136, 934-5, 912-33) as if to provide an image and echo for Coleridge to boost from horror to demonic terror in "Christabel" ("behold her bosom and half her side…a sight to dream of, not to tell!"), a demonic version of the creation of Eve in which the plurality of the gods is a sign for their malice.

Recognition of the uncanny, bestial handiwork of Aphrodite reveals the fulfillment of theurgic poeisis, the innards of Greek prophecy. All Herakles' triumphs over beasts have been involved and are at last consumed in the triumph of the beast working internally; the beast inherited from the divine father, "nourished" by Hera and activated by love; the legend brands the hero with the name of his torturer as if he were her tortured clone, the body of which she is the punitive overmastering aura. The tragedy of this poeisis is fulfilled in death, a negation built into the quest from its source. In addition to revealing Aphrodite as the epitome of traumatic bed-work, of pollution with a glittering surface, is the related message that the dead kill the living, through desire, just as the artifice or image possess and consume their hosts and creators; as virtual reality consumes life:

Long ago my father revealed
To me that I should die by nothing that draws breath
But by someone dead, an inhabitant of Hell.
This was that beast, the centaur, who in death has killed me
Alive, even as it had been divinely revealed. (1159-73, cf. 161-74)

Killed by the dead; it is like the phantoms, "dim forms" and "shadows of shadows" of desire and imagination that return to quench the fire of life, beauty and hope that emitted them in "the Triumph of Life" whose irony is as fierce as that of this great play. The *id* of *idein* that links *identity* to *identical*, life to image is "the beast" which in Shelley's poem also is given a prominent place in a self-consuming triumph over its devotees: "that fierce spirit whose unholy leisure was soothed by mischief since the world begun" as the chariot drives over and transforms them to ghastly phantoms, "following in the dance with limbs decayed" and sinking from fire into darkness and frost (Shelley 510-11). The 'beast' is the idealizing process of poeisis, its generation of images and inevitable collapse of the ideal: "from every firmest limb and fairest face, the strength and freshness fell like dust and left the action and the shape without the grace of life" (Shelley 519-20). This self-consuming quality may be the strongest bond between the tragic recognition of the drama and the image-work of the West per se: phantoms return to kill the living; the act of purification, of transfiguration into aesthetics is disembodiment, is suicide, "an encircling net" that returns the glory of idealized identity to the Wasteland of trauma, disillusionment and confusion. It is the essential seventh circle whose guides, in Dante, are the Centaurs, principally Nessus: "*Quelli e Nesso, che mori per la bella Deianira, e fe di se la vendetta elli stesso*" – "who himself avenged himself" (*Inferno* 12:67-9). Underscoring the point, Herakles activates the poison as he lights a fire of purification and sacrifice: the tragic nature of theurgic poeisis may be seen in a purifying act or image that is the ultimate self-destroying pollution, the recognition of the inner beast within the savior; of death within the image.

Throughout these trauma, "that silent handmaiden, Cyprian Aphrodite is revealed; it is her work" in collaboration with a lord of the bow whose divine prototype injected a polluting ambiguity into Orpheus that generated murderous jealousy, so similar to the engine of *WT*, that led to his dismemberment, a 'purified' singer whose eloquent head is worshipped by his murderers, a lyrical object of love and source of art. As if to foreshadow the unswerving adherence of the West to its aesthetic-geopolitical projects, its proprietary sense that the poison is its own, Herakles orders Hyllus to marry Iole: no one else can share the glorious pollution and martyrdom the project of purification, or its modern idealization grasps as its own. The culture's "worst enemy" must be claimed in image-work's incestuous rite, as the Roman Empire did, for the marriage bed from which artifice is churned (*WT* 1225-7, 1233-37): the defeated and colonized culture-giver becomes the host in a double sense, transfigured into a further weapon against its living beings. In the same way, the "Quartet," a veiled sestet that includes, through its "special envoy," the British Commonwealth and the Vatican, clasps and smothers its own negation and unwilling spouse, Israel. Blake's *Jerusalem: Emanation of the Giant Albion* is a startlingly precise prototype for this late stage geopolitical poeisis as Jerusalem is pressed into the loins and chest of Albion, the original subsumed by the image reified in a world empire (Blake 116, plate 99).

The "agonies are many and strange… and there is nothing here which is not Zeus" (1277-78). State banners still proclaim the imperial eagle's might as the media, forged to globalize fictions disseminate the image cult and its shimmering, alluring, perverse and destroying precursor, Aphrodite, embodiment of violent pollution and boundary erasure. Today she flaunts her open-mouthed, hypnotic charms from millions of billboards and billions of screens, triumphant in world-girdling imagery and "wandering fires," Queen of a worldwide wasteland, dazzled, drunk and drained by images sterile as "holy virgins in their ecstasies" (*Idylls*, "the Holy Grail" 887, 864). The great passions and full-bodied trauma of Herakles and Deianira are lost in the past, living as caricature in a lingering, two – dimensional elegy that wears the mask of laughing Aphrodite.

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Subaltern's Voice in Vijay Tendulkar's Play *Silence! The Court is in Session*

MD. SAQUIB ABRAR

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) occupies an important place in contemporary Indian dramatic literature along with Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar and Mohan Rakesh. Besides twenty eight full length plays, he has also written twenty-four one-act plays. He was deeply concerned with the socio-political controversy of the contemporary society that forms the background for his plays. Many of his plays such as *The Vultures* (1961), *Silence*! *The Court is in Session*(1967), *Encounter in Umbugland*(1969), *Sakharam Binder*(1972), *Kamala*(1981) and *Kanyadaan*(1983) present this socio-political conflict in past as well as in the contemporary world. Moreover, his plays highlight the aloofness of modern man to present day politics, the friction between the society and the individual, relationship between man and woman, social awareness, Dalit's concern and such other social issues. *Silence*! *The Court is in Session* depicts women's subjugated and downtrodden condition and the conflict between an individual and the society on the basis of religion, sexuality and gender conflict in twentieth century male dominated society. But before analyzing the play, it would be apt to look briefly at the subaltern theory, an important aspect of the postcolonial era.

Subaltern theory treats the 'other' as those who were being segregated on the basis of class, sex, race, economy and had no voice of their own. The theory categorically asserts that conventions and traditions are entirely set up by those who are in authority. The term 'Subaltern' came to be used for colonized people in South Asian subcontinent in the 1970s. It throws light on the history of the colonized from a new dimension, i. e., from the perspective of the colonized rather than from the hegemonic power. It is used for those who are economically and politically alfresco of the dominant power edifice. On the other hand, there are critics who use this term for marginalized and the lower sections of the society. This term literally means "an officer in a subordinate position." Originally used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramisci for the proletariats and working class people, the term carried a key connotation with the publication of Gayatri Chakarworthy Spivak's essay entitled "Can the Subaltern Speak" ? (1988) that was later expanded in her book entitled *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999). It is one of the most debatable and influential essays on postcolonial theory. Here, she questions whether the colonized could raise voice against their wretched state or not. Raman Selden states "Spivak's awareness of the subaltern who can not speak makes the question of clarity all the more pertinent . . ." [1]

By and large, this label was used synonymously for 'untouchables', 'tribals', and above all 'women' in general. Elleke Boehmer opines :

> Spivak's contribution to the understanding of the subaltern state under colonialism (*subalternity*), was to expand its signification to include groups even more downgraded than these, and those who do not figure on the social scale at all: for example, tribals or unscheduled castes, untouchables, and, within all these groups, women.[2]

Furthermore,

> For Spivak, therefore, the proper object of postcolonial criticism must be the representational systems that effect the construction, rewriting, and indeed silencing of the female subaltern in the first place.[3]

Homi K. Bhabha, another influential figure of postcolonial theory and the writer of *The Location of Culture* (1994), underlines the significance of the power of society in connection with his definition of subaltern as those who were being oppressed, looked-down, and minority groups and whose presence was essential before the majority group and those who were in power. He was of the view that subaltern social groups are in such a position that they can undermine the control of hegemonic power. He highlights the experiences of social marginality as it was rampant in the society.

Edward Said's work *Orientalism* (1978) is yet another landmark in the history of postcolonial criticism. M. A. R. Habib enunciates :

> In *Orientalism* (1978) Said examines the vast tradition of Western "constructions" of the Orient. This tradition of Orientalism has been a "corporate institution" for coming to terms with the Orient, for authorizing views about it and ruling over it.[4]

The ideas expressed in this book may also be associated with the concept of subaltern for it explains how Westerns have regarded the Orients. Said cogitates that Westerns have created a false and illusionary concept for the Orients. They treat them as uncivilized, savage, illiterate and irrational and were in dire need of modification in order to be rational and civilized. In this way, these so-called Westerners were not ready to hear the voices of Orients. Thus, the term 'subaltern' has been variously used by different theorist in different contexts but, nonetheless, their concern is focused on those sections of society who were looked down upon by those who were in power. Women among all sects of the society have always been regarded as 'other' by male figures. They were thought as weaker, irrational and uncivilized. It is something other that men have written about them, love them, need them, praise them; but all this have been done for their personal gain. This is Spivak's concern too, i. e., women's voice in a male dominated society. And it is from this angle that this paper seeks to analyze Tendulkar's play *Silence*! *The Court is in Session*.

The publication of *Silence*! *The Court is in Session*, brought Tendulkar to a focus of significant critical merit. The play is divided into three Acts and emphasizes the

falsity of middle-class male dominated society. It presents the pathetic lot of Miss Leela Benare, as the central protagonist of the play. As the play opens, it is revealed that a 'Mock Law Court' is about to be held in the village hall where the artists from Bombay are supposed to gather. Jyoti Havnurkar articulates :

> The play begins innocuously enough with what appears to be almost desultory conversation among the artistes of a dramatic troupe, as they arrive group-by-group in a village where they are supposed to perform a show from their repertoire.[5]

Benare is the first one to arrive in the hall while Samant is the next one. As he enters, he is confused to see the bleeding finger of Benare because of her mishandling the bolt. He reminds her about the same happenings to himself. Without caring about such trifle things, she feels amused in his company. Suddenly, she says something to Samant that makes him wonder.

> . . . Let's leave everyone behind, I thought, and go somewhere far, far away-with you! [6]

Furthermore, her sense of likeness is more evident when she says- "You're very nice indeed. And shall I tell you something? You are a very pure and good person. I like you."[7]

Such remarks make Samant wonder as to why she likes him so much. But she goes on in her vocation and asks him about his marital status innocently. The moment she learns that he is single, her desire to possess him becomes more intense and strong. She goes very close to him and Samant finding himself in proximity extends his finger towards her. She pretends it to be an excuse and goes even closer to him. She brings all her effort into practice to seduce Samant for physical relationship but seeing him totally indifferent towards her advances, she considers him to be the best company for the time being till others come. She talks about her profession as a school teacher and praises her students and regards them even better than some adults.

> They're so much better than adults. At least they don't have blind pride of thinking they know everything. . . . They don't scratch you till you bleed, then run away like cowards. . . .[8]

Perhaps Professor Damle was in her mind while making such remarks as it is evident later in the play itself. We are also aware about her pregnancy by Professor Damle. Her hand unexpectedly goes upon her swelling belly; she becomes somehow embarrassed when her eyes meet with Samant. Her sense of individualistic attitude comes on surface when she asserts :

> . . . My life is my own-I haven't sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those-no one! I will do what I like with myself and my life! I'll decide. . . [9]

Samant is ashamed to see all this, therefore, expresses his desire to go outside to know about other co-actors. But she restrains him saying that she is afraid to be there all alone. Samant surmises perhaps she is not well, so, he asks about her health. In order to prove that she is perfectly well, she starts singing in full vigour :

> Oh, I've got a sweetheart
> Who carries all my books,
> He plays in my doll house,
> And says he likes my looks,
> I'll tell you a secret-
> He wants to marry me.
> But Mummy says, I'm too little
> To have such thoughts as these. [10]

To quote N.S. Dharan:-

> The song carries dramatic significance, as it anticipates Karnik's disclosure of Benare's fruitless love for her maternal uncle in the third Act.[11]

Benare, now, moves further and demonstrates about other co-actors sarcastically as : 'Mr. Kashikar'-'Mr. Prime objective', 'Mrs. Kashikar'-'Mrs. Hand-that-Rocks-the-Cradle', 'Sukhatme-'an Expert on the Law', 'Ponkshe'-'Hmm! Sci-en-tist! Inter-failed'. We also learn about the childless fate of Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar. Moreover, she exclaims about Professor Damle :

> And we have an Intellectual too. That means someone who prides himself on his booklearning. But when there's a real life problem, away he runs! Hides his head. He's not here today. Won't be coming, either. He wouldn't dare! [12]

Arrival of other co-actors gives the play a turn. But at the same time Prof. Damle's and Rawte's absence becomes conspicuous. Kashikar predicts that the trial is not just for entertainment. It has some important message too. Sukhatme alleviates Kashikar's anxiety suggesting that he will play the role of Prof. Damle besides playing the role 'of the prosecuting counsel' while Rawte's role was assigned to Samant who seems upset for he has never played such a role and it would be very tough for him to be with these sophisticated actors. Others allay his fear insisting it just to be a game and he will be given proper training in due course of time. Finally, all arrangements for the trial are made. Benare makes it clear that the issue of the trial is- "A case against President Johnson for producing atomic weapons."[13]

But as Benare goes into the inner room for washing her face, other co-actors start hatching a conspiracy against her. Karnik asks Ponkshe whether he knows something about Benare. He persuades him hinting that he, too, wants to say something about her. On Sukhatme's suggestion it is decided that now the trial would be against Miss Benare for committing a social crime. Towards the closure of the first act, Kashikar, the judge of the Mock Law court, asserts that Miss Benare has been arrested on charges of felony.

> Prisoner Miss Benare, under Section No.302 of the Indian Penal Code you are accused of the crime of infanticide. Are you guilty or not guilty of the aforementioned crime? [14]

> Benare's condition after the allegation of such charges becomes very pathetic and intolerable. On hearing it, Benare, as N. S. Dharan puts it "is stunned, and the entire atmosphere becomes extraordinarily somber and tense."[15]

In this "somber and tense" ambience the second Act opens. However, after a while the aura becomes gay with the entry of Samant who has brought *pan,* cigarette, and *beedees* for them. The main issue of the trial is changed and turns into a *pan*-spitting contest. The introduction of this comic relief is dramatically significant as it is convenient for Benare in regaining her composure. But, in due course of time the vibe once again becomes grim when Benare realizes the conspiracy hatched against her by the so-called male-chauvinists. When Benare is forced to accept the guilt, she uncouthly asks Kashikar whether he will accept such charges against himself. Later on, Mr. Ponkshe is called as the first witness to uncover the guilt of Miss Benare. The communion between Sukhatme and Ponkshe is also highly remarkable.

SUKHATME. Mr. Ponkshe, is the accused married or unmarried?

PONKSHE. Why don't you ask the accused?

SUKHATME. But if you were asked, what would you say?

PONKSHE. To the public eye, she is unmarried.[16]

Such conversations are enough to unveil the secrecy of Miss Benare. Ponkshe goes on to mention that Benare enjoys the company of men and "she runs after" them. It's a natural phenomenon that people of opposite sex are attracted towards each other, then, what is wrong in Benare's case if she is interested more and more towards males ? Moreover, when Sukhatme asks Ponkshe about her close relationship with any married or unmarried man, she herself says interrupting the court – "Yes, with the counsel for the prosecution himself! And with the judge. To say nothing of Ponkshe, Balu here or Karnik."[17]

Consequently, Mr. Karnik is called as the second witness. Sukhatme asks about his knowledge of Miss Benare. He evades making a straight commitment. When forced to reply in concrete terms, he admits it vaguely because-" It's strange! Sometimes we feel we know someone. But in fact we don't. Truth is stranger than fiction."[18] Then, Karnik is asked to explain the meaning of the term 'mother'. He replies a mother is one who gives birth to the children but Sukhatme does not agree saying a bitch also gives birth to a puppy. Karnik says of course, it gives and will be called a mother. Finally, he is postulated whether the accused has ever tried to have an agreement with him. He declines for having such agreement, however, admits Rokde has had the same.

Rokde comes as the third witness. He is interrogated vigorously to admit something in this connection. Mrs. Kashikar requests Balu Rokde to give a fantastic bit of clue against the accused Miss Benare. Rokde is panic-stricken in admitting any such token. Perspirations are rolling from his forehead. Suddenly, he looks towards Benare and with great valour enumerates that a few days ago when he went to Prof. Damle's house, he was astonished to see Miss Benare at his house at night. Benare contradicts and says that all this has been pre-planned to make her ashamed before others.

There is no need at all to drag my private life into this. I can visit whom I like.

Damle wasn't eating me up.[19]

But Sukhatme is pleased to know about her personal affair and is curious enough to know more. He provokes Rokde to reveal more. Thus, he expresses his shock to see

her there in the evening hour. Such charges make Benare's condition just like a fish out of water. She makes them aware that if someone is with someone, it does not mean that he/she is of loose character. If she will be seen in her principal's chamber then does it mean there is something wrong between them? Sukhatme says that these points are also notable as proof. Being furiated, she remarks- "If you like, I'll give you the names and addresses of twenty-five more people with whom I am alone at times. . . ."[20]

Subsequently, Mr. Samant, the fourth witness is called. As he has already captured the discomfiture of Benare, he does not want to admit further. Thus, when asked about his visiting Prof. Damle's house, he responds in such a way as if he knew nothing :

Where? No, no! Why that room's in Bombay! And I was in this village.

Hardly! It's silly-I don't know your Professor Damle from Adam. How could I get to his room? Isn't that right? What are you up to![21]

But when convinced that this is just a mock-trial, Samant starts publicizing about her in idiosyncratic manner. He says that once he went to Prof. Damle's house, it was locked from inside. He rang the bell. Prof. Damle came out and asked whom he wanted to meet. As he said,- "Prof. Damle", he (the person who came out) simply replied "he is not at home" and closed the door. But since he had had to deliver an important message, he stood outside in a great dilemma as what to do. Synchronically, he heard someone crying inside the room. The crying was not of a man but of a woman. He wondered to see all this and did not think it to be someone from Damle's family members because no one would cry in such a secretive tone in her own house. Therefore, he stood there to quench his curiosity. He heard the conversation between them. This sort of evidences thrilled other co-actors. And they became eager to know more. At last Samant accords :

If you will abandon me in this condition, where shall I go?

. . . . . .

'Where you should go is entirely your problem. I feel great sympathy for you. But I can do nothing. I must protect my reputation?' At that, the women said, 'That's all, you can talk about, your reputation? How heartless you are!' He replied, 'Nature is heartless.'

. . . . . .

'If you abandon me, I shall have no choice but to take my life.' 'Then do that. I also have no choice. If you kill yourself, I shall be in torment.'[22]

Hearing such allegations, Benare once again becomes nervous and requests Samant not to move any further, otherwise, she will leave the hall. Caught in the situation, she denies all the charges levelled against her remarking, "You've all deliberately ganged upon me! You've plotted against me!"[23] But Sukhatme is still not satisfied and requests Samant to go further. Knowing such allegations, Benare's eyes are full of tears and they are constantly rolling upon her cheek. Once again the atmosphere becomes grave and serious. Subsequently, Samant realizes Benare's seriousness. He says, "Dear, oh dear! Whatever's happened so suddenly to the lady?"[24] Eventually, Benare makes up her mind to leave the room taking her bag, purse, etc. but she is horrified to see the door closed from outside. This Act comes to an end here with the words of Sukhatme, beseeching Kashikar to call Miss Benare to the witness-box.

The last Act opens with the utterances of Sukhatme inviting Miss Benare to come to the witness-box. But she remains adamant and is not ready to utter a single syllable. Mrs. Kashikar, dragging her forces to take an oath to be truthful. Here, the dramatist provides ample chance to Mrs. Kashikar to torment Miss Benare. Perhaps, this has been done to expose another mental set-up of the people. Generally, people have firm faith that women are jealous by nature and do not like to see the happiness of others. Mrs. Kashikar being a childless lady, looks towards Benare with contemptible eyes perhaps because she is about to become a mother. Further, Sukhatme asks Benare to state her age but she is silent. This makes other co-actors furious. Sukhatme remarks :

> Prisoner Benare, it is your responsibility to answer any questions put to you as a witness. [*Pausing a little*] Prisoner Benare, What are you waiting for? Answer the question![25]

She is still silent, therefore, Mrs. Kashikar states she must be around thirty-two. To know this, other co-actors wonder as how she has kept herself unmarried till such an advanced age? Kashikar thinks it to be one of the most important causes of promiscuity. Parents should take care of their children especially female ones and they must arrange for their wedlock "before puberty". If this is done, these evils will ultimately come to an end. Sukhatme wants to know the motive behind her remaining unmarried till then. Mrs. Kashikar candidly says :

> ... That's what happens these days when you get everything without marrying. They just want comfort ... That's how promiscuity has spread throughout our society.[26]

It is enough to disclose the contemporary situation of the Indian society. With the use of the term 'everything' Mrs. Kashikar's implication is the physical relationship between male and female, that has been understood by male actors too, but despite this they oblige Mrs. Kashikar to elucidate this term. Here, Mrs. Kashikar realizes that she has thrown egg on her own face, so, she tried to give the distorted meaning of the term, i. e., to change the topic. Once again, Rokde is summoned for giving further evidences against Miss Benare. Mrs.Kashikar reminds Rokde of an incident of the misbehaviour of Benare. She had caught his hand in the dark. Rokde admits that whatever Mrs. Kashikar has said is right adding that when he opposed it, Benare intimidated him to keep it secret, otherwise, she would ruin his life. After deliberate thinking, Benare contradicts him that all such allegations are just a lie. But Rokde goes on to say that he had slapped her also.

Mr. Ponkshe is invited once again who adds fuel to the flames. He says that Benare wanted to marry him. She had also told him about her love affair with a man that has resulted in her pregnancy. In the words of Ponkshe :

> Miss Benare made me promise never to tell anyone the name of the man- who so she said-had made her pregnant. So far I've kept my word.[27]
>
> Everyone starts persuading him to disclose the name of the man. Ultimately, he discloses it to be none other than Prof. Damle.

Afterward, Mr. Karnik comes to contradict Rokde and informs that it was Miss Benare who had slapped. Miss Benare accosted him to marry for the sake of the unborn

child but when he refused, she had slapped him in pique. As there are contradictions in their nub, Sukhatme compromises the situation :

> Thank you, Mr. Karnik. This means that it is true the accused was pressing Rokde to marry her. The only difference in what you say is about who slapped whom.[28]

Furthermore, Karnik reveals another secret - Miss Benare's unsuccessful love affair with her own maternal uncle that is regarded as incest.

Now, Sukhatme himself expresses his opinion in this matter. Sexual relationship and bringing the child before marriage, he opines, is a grave sin.

> . . . Motherhood without marriage has always been considered a very great sin by our religion and traditions. . . . But bringing up the child of an illegal union is certainly more horrifying. . . .[29]

While such allegations were being inflicted on Miss Benare, she was left with no other choice then to listen to all this. She is filled with a sense of disgust and resentment for all these hypocritical men. Subsequently, when Kashikar asks Benare if she wants to say anything in her defense before the verdict is announced, she pounces upon this opportunity stating that since she has not uttered a single syllable, she has "a lot to say". There follows a fairly long monologue by her. She states that she was gripped with a sense of fear since no one was by her side when she was in difficulty. The persons whom she regarded her own had deserted her. No one is there who can empathize with her mental trauma and anguish. She has only and only disgust for this world, therefore, it is not worth while to live :

> . . . Life is a poisonous snake that bites itself. Life is a betrayal. Life is a fraud. Life is a drug. Life is drudgery. Life is something that's nothing--or a nothing that's something. . . .[30]

She affirms about everyone's individualistic life where no one is supposed to butt in. It depends on the individuals to decide about their personal affair. She unveils the ambidextrous nature of the males whose sole obsession was on her belly and blossoming youth. They have had nothing to do with her agony :

> . . . These are the mortal remains of some cultured men of the twentieth century. See their faces--how ferocious they look! Their lips are full of lovely worn out phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires. . . .[31]

By and by, she confesses her sin of falling in love with her own maternal uncle when she was in her teen-age and hardly knew the meaning of sin :

> . . . It's true, I did commit a sin. I was in love with my mother's brother. But in our strict house, in the prime of my unfolding youth, he was the one who came close to me. He praised my bloom everyday. . . . , it was a sin! Why, I was hardly fourteen! I didn't even know what sin was-- I swear by my mother, I didn't! . . .[32]

Tears rolled out of her eyes while divulging this sin. She also discloses that everyone including her mother was against this match. The man, i.e., her uncle himself was against marrying her. She realizes her fault in providing her body to him but all this was futile to think now. Her sense of disgust for him finds expression in these words :

. . . I felt like smashing his face in public and spitting on it! . . .[33]

As a grown up lady, again she fell in love and thought it to be fruitful. But she was wrong. The man, whom she regarded as a god, gave her body to him subsequently resulting in her pregnancy, knocked her down and did not give shelter. He was interested only in satisfying his sexual appetite :

> . . . He wasn't a god. He was a man. For whom everything was of the body, for the body! That is all! Again, the body!. . .[34]

She predicts that it is her body that has brought such a plight. Her agony comes out ultimately when she remarks :

> . . . This body is a traitor! [*She is writhing with pain.*] I despise this body– and I love it! I hate it, but it's all you have, in the end, isn't it? . . . And where will you go if you reject it? . . .[35]

Finally, she professes her desire to live for the sake of her future child. It shows that there is a strong passion to become a mother. As N.S. Dharan states :

> She asserts in pain and anxiety that hers is a selfless mother's quest founded on her would-be son's most essential needs. The boy must have a mother, a father, a house and a good reputation in society.[36]

After confessing her sin, she becomes silent. It is time for the pronouncement of the verdict. But before it, Kashikar utters something that is also remarkable. He regards motherhood as a noble and pure entity, but if someone has an illicit love affair, it is not acceptable either by society or religion. Since Miss Benare has committed this crime, therefore, the court passes the judgement that the foetus must be destroyed, although, she will be allowed to live. Benare shrieks out, groans in pain to receive such an illogical verdict :

> No! No! No!-I won't let you do it. I won't let it happen, I won't let it happen![37]

Uttering these words, she comes at the stool meant for defense counsel, sits on it and collapses. There is stern silence.

It is here that someone comes from outside and enquires about the beginning of the show. Samant informs them to come after five minutes. The other co-actors are busy in dressing themselves for performance but the frozen figure of Benare captures their eye and they make all effort to get her up but all this was futile. They remind her that it was just a mock-trial, therefore, she must not feel hurt and should not take it by heart. Then, they enter the inner room leaving Samant all alone in the hall. He gazes at the frozen and inactive figure of Benare. He also tries to wake her up. Seeing that there is no response, he places the artificial parrot, that he has brought for his nephew as it is introduced in the opening of the play, before Benare, and comes outside. As he comes out, an unknown voice comes from the hall as if it is of Miss Benare singing a poem.

> The parrot to the sparrow said,
> 'Why, oh why, are your eyes so read?'
> . . .
> O sparrow, sparrow, poor little sparrow . . . [38]

It is here that the play comes to an end and we are left to draw our own conclusion regarding the future of Miss Benare. It may be assumed that the poem elucidates Prof. Damle's ill-treatment with Miss Benare.

To conclude, it may be conjectured that the play is a satire on the custom and hypocrisy of the middle class male-dominated society whose mere concern is to maintain the moral code. It is this convention because of which Miss Benare is in search of a man whom she can marry so that her unborn child will have a proper status in society and she can have her own reputation as well as people will not call her a whore/prostitute. At this point the question that strikes our mind is -Why not the co-actors accuse that hypocrite who has made her pregnant? Indulging in such a crime is the equal guilt of both male and female. Nobody cares about the hypocrite male figure and only poor Miss Benare is taken as target. Why? It is only because the society is male-dominated where women are not allowed to raise voice against their subjugated state. Finally, she expresses the hypocrisy of the male-chauvinists. While going through this play we have already noticed that Miss Benare is not allowed to speak when she wanted to say something in defense of her charges. She was again and again reprimanded to maintain silence while the court was in session. On the other hand, physical relationship should not be established outside marriage, otherwise, there will be no difference between human beings and animals. Marriage as a social institution will have no meaning if we indulge in sexual relationship before marriage. Therefore, if someone is found in such heinous activity, both of them should be mated equal punishment. But what generally happens is that after the exposal of such a sin only women are comdemed.

The dramatist, though a male himself, is not biased against women and represent the reality of cotemporary society objectively. He makes us aware of the problem, although, he does not provide any solution and leaves it on the audiences/readers to draw their own conclusion.

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Rhetoric of Desire and Despair: Badal Sircar's *That Other History* in Existential Vision

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In the novel *Death in the Afternoon,* for Ernest Hemingway, the elegant spectacle of the valiant bullfighter flirting with death is a metaphor for a true artist and an 'authentic' individual as well. This compulsive confrontation of life and death ennobles the art, artist and the world. In the formative years (1957-1970) Sircar was desperately seeking this courageous and elegant bullfighter in himself and in his art. Through the Writer in *Evam Indrajit*, Badal Sircar shows of his own desire, "The audacious assertion of life claims immortality in its brief spark. These are sparks. I have to write my play on the story of the claims of immortality of these brief sparks…" (Evam 43). In *Evam Indrajit* (1965), *Shesh Nei* (There's No End, 1970), *Pagla Ghora* (The Mad Horse, 1967) *Tringsha Shatabdi* (The Thirtieth Century, 1966) Sircar recurrently returned to the theme of existential question, nihilism and guilt-ridden impotent middle class individual. His heroes struggle towards a new understanding of 'being for self" (Sartre's term for 'consciousness') in terms of the 'Other'. *Baki Itihas* or *That Other History* (1967) is no exception. Here Sharad (Though in Bengali version, it was Sharadindu and V.L. Doshi in his translation curtails the name) witnesses the vicious presence of evil in the pathway of human existence. In *Evam Indrajit*, Indrajit during his conversation with the Writer directly raised the problem of evil in this godless universe but in *That Other History* Sircar demands the individual responsibility towards the evil.

> INDRAJIT: I read a long time ago that all those atomic weapons are controlled by buttons. And there are interlocking systems so nobody can spark off an atomic warfare by pushing the wrong button. Just imagine, a minor oversight could destroy the whole world!
>
> WRITER: So?
>
> INDRAJIT: Nothing. This priceless, invaluable life – about which we think so much, measured and count… (*Evam* 40).

Indrajit questions the validity of living under the shadows of death. And nobody can forget how Camus begins his *The Myth of Sisyphus*. He too asks the same fatal question – to live or to die.

In the existential philosophy, this dilemma is the final stage of the 'definite awakening'. Camus elucidates the destiny of the war between man and the universe in the following ways,

> Weariness comes at the end of the act of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return to the chain or it's a definitive awakening. At the end of the awakening comes, in time the consequence: suicide or recovery. (*Myth* 19)

In *Caligula*, Cherea, assessing Caligula's dilemma says, "To lose one's life is no great matter … But what's intolerable is to see one's life being drained of meaning, to be told there's no reason for existing. A man can't live without some reason for living" (Act II, 21). Here lies the question of voluntary death and living in an absurd life. By suicide an individual confesses that life is intolerable to him. And instinctively he counters it, ridicules it by suicide as Kirilov in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* did. And thereby he freed himself from the clutches of absurdity; it is one kind of revolt against the absurdity of world. But the absolute rebellion and sarcasm to absurdity lies not in this blunt escape but in living and loving the world. The defense against nihilism and self-destruction is the test of intellectualism of an absurd hero. For Heidegger, Camus and Sartre, death is the ultimate victor and the incarnation of the ultimate evil which terminates all of possible meaning, our struggle and our freedom. Thus Sartre says, "Thus the very existence of death alienates us wholly in our own life to the advantages of the Others. To be dead is to be a prey for the living" (*Being and Nothingness* 695). The only essence of humankind lies in the constant struggle against death. Badal Sircar in his *That Other History* elaborates the two kinds of gestures towards life and death. One is represented by Seetanath who ridicules the absurdity and cruelty by voluntary death. And on the other hand, Sharad represents the absolute revolt and freedom.

In Enugu, some months before Sircar had written *That Other History*, he scribbled an important section of Charlie Chaplin's *The Autobiography* in his diary, "Over the years I have discovered that ideas come through an intense desire for them; continually desiring, the mind becomes a watchtower on the look for incidents that may excite the imagination – music, a sunset, may give image to an idea" (*Hijibiji* 266). Sircar's deep mediation on the nature of death was excited by news of a man's suicide read in France. In his diary written on 23rd January, 1964, he scrawled his ideas at random, "A picture comes. A story of man's suicide read in a newspaper. An imagination – first scene, the wife's opinion. Second imagination – second scene. And the last scene – the version of the ghost of the dead" (*Hijibiji* 230). In *That Other History,* Sircar directly spelled out the story as it is experienced by him during a creative process. The news of suicide comes to a couple, Vasanti and Sharad, and the wife is asked by her husband to weave a story from her own point of view. Act I consists of the enactment of Vasanti's opinion about Seetanath's suicide. She holds the domestic unhappiness as the cause of the suicide. Then the husband weaves a story. Sharad blames the "Lolita Fixation" as the cause of the man's suicide and in Act III, the dead man appears before Sharad and justifies his voluntary death as a revolt against the evil that gnaws human existence from the dawn of the civilization. Here Seetanath and Sharad engage in a dual. While

Seetanath insists that living in this cruel world is utter absurdity, Sharad asserts that redemption lies not in the death but in the constant struggle with the death. In the course of the debate Sharad for the first time encounters that he has been caged in his egotistic world and dragging drab meaningless world. He realized that man is born by chance, live by encounter and die by accident. Persuaded by Seetanath's discursive logic, Sharad confronts the dreadful presence of evil and decides to rebel against the hackneyed living by committing suicide like Seetanath. But it is the chance appearance of his friend Vasudev that saved him. It is not avoiding death by chance; but the main emphasis is on the fatal knowledge that Sharad comes to know. Now on, he has to carry the absurd world with the realization of its 'no-thing-ness' (Sartre's term).

The whole matrix of *That other History* structurally follows Camusian thought of suicide. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus says :

> There are many causes for suicide and generally the most obvious one were not the most powerful. Rarely is suicide committed …through hypothesis. What sets off the crisis is almost unverifiable. Newspaper often speaks of 'personal sorrow' or of 'incurable illnesses'. These explanations are plausible. But one would have to know whether a friend of the desperate man had not that very day addressed him indifferently. He is the guilty one. For that is enough to precipitate all the rancours and all the boredom still in suspension (13).

Here Vasanti's version confirms Seetanath's 'personal sorrow' and Sharad's 'incurable illness'. But the ghost's version nullifies all the hypothetical discourses and narrates an existential version of the event. Sircar in an interview with Biplab Chakraborty acknowledges the similarity of *That Other History* and *Evam Indrajit* with *The Myth of Sisyphus* (*Pessimism* 169). The whole story is an enactment of a creative process happening within the mind of Sircar. In this way Sircar himself becomes the character in this play. Sharad and Vasanti are none but Sircar himself. The play is about the process of creating an art from a stimulus. In the process of a Sircar's creative adventure to write a story from a stimulus, a philosophy of life is discover at the end. The story begins with the stimulus of an image of man committing suicide, and then the writer himself makes 'a feminine domestic story' to be told through Vasanti, then proceeds to a 'mature psychological realism' of Sharad, and ultimately sneaks into an existential supra-realism narrating the archetypal conflict of life and death. Thus in the process of storytelling Sircar arrives at the fatal question of validity of living an absurd life in the face of gnawing evil.

The play opens with a setting similar to Coward's 'drawing-room comedies' where a middle class couple, Sharad and Vasanti starts their usual Sunday business. Their conversation ranges from the payment of the electric bill to the wedding invitation. Initially they have planned to take a short holiday trip to Botanical Garden and Diamond Harbour, but ultimately decide to stay at home. Then Vasudev, the colleague from Sharad's college, came to their house for morning tea. In a jocund holiday mood they have started their usual Sunday. We come to know that Vasanti is a creative writer and

her recent story in a magazine is quite a successful attempt. Vasudev insists her to write a similar smash hit. But Vasanti says that she is out of any theme.

When Vasudev has retired, Sharad gives Vasanti a clue from the newspaper for her next story. The short news covers the suicide of their distant acquaintance Seetanath. Vasanti stars weaving a story. Her narration is supported by visual representation. Her version determines domestic unhappiness as the cause of Seetanath's suicide. With the lights slowly fading, the setting shifts to the house of Seetanath and his wife, Kanak (in the original Bengali version her name was Kana). Here Seetanath and Kanak are seen struggling with their poverty. They have been scrimping and saving all the year to build a house of their own. Kanak is more obsessed with the economic security than Seetanath. She carefully cherishes the dream of having a home of her own on a newly bought land. Like Mrs. Thurlow in H.E. Bates' short story *The Ox,* Kanak is obsessed with a secure future. Kanak is a woman with an unthinking singleness of purpose to save enough money to build a home. She has been denying herself from minimum lavishness for that. She reacts hysterically when anything is said against her dream. And she knows her obsession and holds her deprived childhood responsible for that.

> SEETANATH: OK. But tell me, why is having a house of your own so important to you, Kanak?
>
> ... ...
>
> KANAK : You could have understood it, if you had been brought up in the kind of condition in which I did … Never had anything which I could tell mine – my very own. Let alone a room, but not even a simple sari or a blouse. Nothing! Not even a dirty little piece of string belonged to me. (Act II, 6)

We come to know that due to sheer poverty, Kanak's Sister had disgraced herself by becoming mistress of an evil man. But to Kanak her sister had done nothing wrong. She did all to survive and for a good life. Thus to Kanak, the desired home is the realization of her possessed dream. And to Seetanath, his wife is his only love. But suddenly this love story takes a twist when the bailiff appears on the gate. The bailiff brings the court-summon for an unpaid mortgage repayment. Seetanath tries his best to hide the truth, but Kanak ultimately comes to know that her dream is on mortgage, she also discovers that Seetanath has been lying about saving money and now, she is left with nothing. In a hysteric fit she locked herself behind the doors. Then an old man appears on the gate to unfold Seetanath's lie. He is the father of Kanak. He has been constantly blackmailing Seetanath for money for long. Seetanath has been so far given the money to cover the truth about her father's character. Seetanath has thought that the gambler father had caused enough shame to Kanak, so he lied to Kanak that her father had died in an accident. The sole purpose of Seetanath was to see Kanak happy, but in the course he has drained the money saved for the home and mortgaged the house. When the old man goes out, Kanak comes out of the room with a suitcase in her hand; she is about to leave Seetanath to go to Seetanath's rich friend, Nikhil to seek her desired security. She has decided to take the profession that her sister had shown her. In sheer shock Seetanath committed suicide by stabbing with a kitchen knife. In Vasanti's

opinion Seetanath was pushed to the edge of perpetual stillness when Kanak had deserted him. Here a happy conjugal life is destroyed by a crude revelation. But the version is weak, melodramatic and unconvincing story justifying a suicide for the cause of personal sorrow. The best criticism of Vasanti's story could be found in Sharad's comment in the beginning of Act II.

While in Vasanti's version it is the outer world which is vulnerable, in Sharad's version, it is the 'inner storm' that creates the deadly vortex in Seetanath's life. In response to Vasanti's melodramatic story, Sharad says; "Well, I feel that when a person commits suicide, he is usually a victim of some severe mental disorder. Deep inside him this thing is eating him. His nerves get highly strung and snap at the slightest jolt. In short he is very sick mentally" (Act II, 10). Sharad's version uses the setting of Vasanti's story and here Kanak is seen discussing about Seetanath's bizarre behavior in last few days with Vijay, Seetanath's colleague from the school. Here we see that Seetanath has decided to expel a student, Ashok because Ashok is caught reading Nabokov's *Lolita* in the class. While everybody including Vijay and the school secretary, Vidhi*babu* regards Seetanath's decision as an heavy punishment for a venial offence, Seetanath is seen adamant to punish him. Actually Lolita is a stimulus for Seetanath's long standing hidden guilt consciousness which was initiated ten years ago in the jungle of Chambalgad. Kanak narrated that ten years ago, Kanak and Seetanath went to Chambalgad to spend their summer vacation, and they befriended the forest officer Banwarilal and his little daughter Parvati. In the dark forest, in a hysteric fit, Seetanath raped Parvati. There in the heart of darkness, Seetanath realized his darkest evil in his heart. From then on he has been haunted down by the guilty feeling. He ripped all the relationship and memories related to Chambalgad and he shunned all the physical intimacy with his wife. Through perseverance he tried to control his sexual perversion. But Seetanath couldn't come out of the incident and the guilt feeling. Vijay knows that Seetanath preoccupied with some thought often scribbled the name Parvati and Chambalgad in the paper. Neither Vijay nor Kanak knows what exactly happens in Chambalgad. But in the end he confesses, "Day and night that ugly poisonous virus grew in my body – like some horrendous germs it spread though my system – multiplying in thousands, millions each moment" (Act II 16). Thus Seetanath is well aware of the Humbert within himself. By punishing Ashok, he wants to punish none but himself. His hatred for *Lolita* is his personalized guilt ridden psyche. He says in a fit of rage, "This is a very mild punishment for what he did. Actually, he should be tied to a post in the street and horsewhipped" (Act II, 11). But he realizes his mistakes at the end–one was punishing Ashok wrongly for his own guilt, and the other was to run way from the guilt. After a fiery debate over this issue of crime and punishment, Seetanath goes out to calm his mind. But he returns with a greater realization that Parvati was not an isolated event, but it is an expression of the poison ivy rooted deep in his psyche. He realized that he is suffering from dreadful pedophile disorder called Lolita fixation. He confesses before Vijay the sin he had committed in Chambalgarh and says that Parvati is still living within himself. He admits that when he has gone to the school secretary, Vidhi*babu*'s house,

he saw Vidhu*babu*'s young granddaughter, Gouri. He says, "Yes, Vijay! Gouri!! Parvati may have dissolved into past but Gouri is in the present – today – now! Parvati was the victim of some dacoit. But who can tell what is in store for Gouri – what will be her fate" (Act II, 17).Vijay tries to encourage Seetanath to overcome his guilt consciousness, but Seetanath has already decided to kill the devil on which he has no control, he wants to end all his torment and to save the little girl, Gouri from his perverted scheme.

Like Nabokov's Humbert, Seetanath too is under the strong obsession of the pedophiliac fixation. Both know their guilt and call their obsession as 'devil'. Seetanath's guilt gnaws him when he associates himself with Hurbert's crime. There are several similarities between Seetanath and Humbert. They are as follows :

1. Both are suffering from sexual perversion of pedophilia.
2. Humbert for the first time discovered the 'devil' in him in his relation with Annabel and here Seetanath in his relationship with Parvati.
3. After twenty-four years Humbert came under the same obsession when he saw Lolita, here, after ten years, Seetanath was tormented when he had seen Gouri.
4. Both saw in their second victim, the reflection of the first; Humbert saw Annabelle in Lolita, and Seetanath saw Parvati in Gouri.
5. Both practiced temperance to curve their fixation.
6. While Humbert is convicted in court, Seetanath punishes himself by committing suicide.
7. Both are married persons and their wives don't know about the disease.

As in Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), the devil's gate is the gateway of the each narrative and the storytelling returns to the gate after each of the three versions, so also in *That Other History* the couple's apartment is the gateway of narratives. After each narrative Sircar returns to the couple to narrate the last few lines of their versions. Sircar uses this technique deliberately to impute the sense of continuation and make the impression that the audience is viewing nothing but a version or opinions of truth. This technique is also used to comment on the version. Whether it is Sharad's criticism of Vasanti's story in the beginning of Act II or Vasanti's reaction to Sharad's version in Act III, it is nothing but audience reaction to both versions. Vasanti's doubt over the possibility of Sharad's justification is nothing but to build the dramatic tension and to let the story roll further. As Sharad became angry when he had been criticized so also did Vasanti when she was criticized for being 'melodramatic' and 'unrealistic'. Actually both imply a subjective impression of the objective event.. In Vasanti's version, we find a feminine domestic story emphasizing on the economic security, the misunderstanding between husband and wife. Here the female character Kanak covers the central stage, while the male protagonist Seetanath is sidelined. On the other hand, in Sharad's version Seetanath, who is like Sharad a teacher and has the habit of collecting newspaper-cutting, takes the central stage. While to a female it is the outer world which is vulnerable, to a male it is the inner world. Each protagonist of the respective versions is the subjective projection of the narrator himself or herself. In his production in 1967, Sombhu Mitra

experimented with this idea. He employed one actor to play the role of Sharad and Seetanath and one actress to play Vasanti and Kanak. Each narration is the ejaculation of the subjective self of the narrator. And both are caged in their arrogant egotistic perspectives of respective gender, family and world. But in Act III, with the encounter of Sharad and the ghost of Seetanath, Sircar stretched the narration beyond ego and superego to the realm of an objective knowledge of human existence. Here Like the woodcutter's version of *Rashomon,* Seetanath's version is the binding force that resolves the conflict of all the versions of a truth. As In *Rashomon* with the woodcutter's version in the end, we realized the presence of evil in every human being, so also after the ghost's version in this play, we realize the audacious spark of human resistance to the evil in the universe.

Act III opens with the concluding narration and the critical remark of Vasanti's on Sharad's version. Sharad realizes that slowly he is becoming obsessed with Seetanath and his idea of suicide. He confesses that he is too obsessed to sleep in the night (18). His obsession with the idea of suicide causes Seetanath's ghost to appear before him. G.J.V Prasad in his article "The Third Gaze" says that Seetanath is the suppressed self of Sharad (73). Even I will say Seetanath dwells inside everyman, it is a matter of discovery of the suppressed self. Sharad knows that all were nothing but stories, but his irritation to reach at some definite conclusion shows that Seetanath is deep inside him. Seetanath's ghost takes Sharad to the knowledge of human existence beyond his routine existence. When Sharad asks Seetanath why he had committed suicide, Seetanath takes out a scrap book full of images. The images show that the human history is the history of unspeakable cruelty, beastly extortion and bloodbath. The images range from the Joan of Arc to the Vietnam War, from Bhima's Revenge to Hitler's concentration camps. Seetanath says that in the ancient Egypt, the wonderful pyramids were built on the frozen blood glued with sweat of the thousand labour, and in the ancient Rome, people laughed at the sight of lion tearing human heart with sharp claws. The scrap book is full of images of tragedy of humankind in Alabama cotton filed, Spanish Civil War and Pearl Harbour. Seetanath holds the view that every man is responsible for everything happening around him and every human should take the collective responsibility of the guilt. Sartre nourished the same concept of responsibility which he called 'objective responsibility'. He says in *Being and Nothingness* "There is no innocent victim of war", "we have the war we deserve" (709) and "man is responsible for everything which happens to man" (708). In his play *Loser Wins*, Sartre through Franz's tape recorder addressed the whole humanity to take the responsibility of what has happened, what is happening and what will happen. In *Tringsha Shatabdi* (Thirtieth Century) similar philosophy of 'objective responsibility' can be found. Here Sharad arranges a trial of those who were responsible for the World War II. Almost the entire world is held responsible including the victims of the war. At the end Sharad accuses himself for the war too. Here Sharad like Franz also used the tape recorder to spread the message of responsibility of human being.

In *That Other History*, Seetanath realized that human history is either the visage of endless cruelty of one over anther or the conglomeration of passive gestures

commanded by existence; and to him living in this absurd world is an act of passivity too, thus he has committed suicide. He persuades Sharad to accept his logic and to take the responsibility of every human act. He repeatedly asks Sharad "Why he lives" but Sharad has no answer. Then Seetanath shows that Sharad is living an inauthentic life dipped in world of daily routine. Sharad like Amal Vimal and Kamal in *Evam Indrajit* is imprisoned in the countless self-deceptive gestures like passing the exam, job, marriage, family and children. Seetanath sums up the life of Sharad in the following ways, "There was only one meaning to become man. Study, learn, pass the exam. To stand on one's own feet which means get a job. Which in other words meant that by regularly selling a big chunk of one's self, establish a timely boarding and lodging arrangement" (Act III 20). Seetanath narrated how he had continued living in the world of "being for others" and "being in itself" (Sartre's term for the states of unconscious being), till the day when he decided to put an end to the absurd of life, Seetanath shows that there is no difference between his own life and Sharad. Here Sircar marvelously shifts the dialogues which Sharad and Vasanti have shared early in the play to Kanak and Seetanath's conversation emphasizing how Sharad was engaged in his meaningless existence like Seetanath. The audiences realize that Seetanath is the alter ego of Sharad. Both are in the deadly vortex of absurdity. While Seetanath revolted against the absurd living by voluntary death, Sharad goes on living in the world of mechanical gestures. Then Seetanath leaves Sharad to realize the other history of human existence. As Seetanath's ghost had faded away, Sharad too decided to commit suicide like Seetanath; but the chance appearance of Vasudev with news of Sharad's promotion saved him. He returns from the valley of the dead with a dreadful knowledge.

> VASUDEV: … Hey, are you OK? You are not going mad or anything are you?
>
> SHARAD: Mad? Yes. Vasudev, I will have to be mad. For my job – my promotion. I will have to become mad – there is no other way for me to live. (Act III, 23)

Seetanath gives him the "Tree of Knowledge" which drives him mad like Indrajit. But he realizes that while Seetanath escapes the absurdity of life, he has to fight the nightmare every day from now on.

Here the play explains two different kinds of rebellion – one who escapes the absurdity by suicide and the other who believes in futile struggle without having any hope of redemption. In *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus has discussed about those two attitudes towards absurdity – first is an emotional response and other the is an intellectual rebellion. In *The Myth* Camus says about the first kind :

> You continue making the gestures commanded by existence for many reasons, the first of which is habit. Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, insane characters of that daily agitation and useless suffering. (13)

Recognizing the evil of human existence Seetanath decides to ridicule absurdity by voluntary death. Frustrated by his desire Seetanath is consumed in the vortex of

despair. The terrible stasis of the existence fatigues Seetanath. He wants to escape into the world of oblivion. In the course Seetanath, like Caligula, enters into the realm of self-destructive nihilism. Camus calls Kirilov's suicide as 'superior- suicide'. Kirilov in *the Possessed* too realized that life is a bad dream and by suicide he wants a full control of his own life. He thinks that by suicide he can assert the liberty. By killing himself he wants to be a god. But to Camus and Sartre, suicide is the annihilation of all the freedom. Camus has denied the status of metaphysical rebellion to those who destroy the other and destroy the self. In *The Rebel* he says :

> Hatred for the creator can turn to hatred of creation or to exclusive and defiant love of what exists. But in both cases it ends in murder and loses the right to be called rebellion. … Apparently there are rebels who want to die and those who want to cause death. But they are identical, consumed with the desire for life, frustrated by their desire and therefore preferring generalized injustice to mutilate justice (73).

To Camus metaphysical rebellion is not an emotional reaction to absurd but it is an intellectual gesture. Suicide or death is the end of all our suffering and our freedom; it is a submission to life and death to dominate over the individual. Like Camus, Sartre too considers death as a limit to our freedom, and death removes all meaning from life - negative side of the nihilism. Suicide is an act of cowardice. To Sartre "Suicide is an absurdity which causes my life to be submerged in absurd" (*Being & Nothingness* 690). For an existentialist, death in the form of suicide is the temptation of an illusionary freedom from nihilism. Actually, suicide is an escape from the battle. The redemption lies in the futile struggle with a conscious dissatisfaction and simultaneous rejection. Thus Sisyphus who is an embodiment of metaphysical rebellion never commits suicide.

Here Seetanath like Kirilov wants to escape by rejecting the life. And Camus has criticized Kirilov for this rejection. For him living with awareness and accepting the absurdity is the hallmark of the metaphysical rebellion. Sharad here redeems at the cost of Seetanath. He accidentally escapes death but Sharad's accident implies his positivity which dwells inside himself. He always strives towards life force. In the battle of life and death he continually strives for meaning, value and preciousness of life; he says, "…the history of death cannot become the history of life" (Act III, 20-21). On the other hand, Seetanath aims at Kirilov's instinct, "If living becomes impossible. Die!" (Act III, 20). Seetanath dies but he explains to Sharad the essential contradiction of being alive. Seetanath's logic involves the instinct, while Sharad's accident implies intellect.

Thus *That Other History* is a play of revelation of the other side of the history of human existence. Like Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird,* the whole play *That Other History* happens in 'the land of memory" of both Sharad and Badal Sircar and in the process both realize the presence of the bullfighter of *Death in the Afternoon* in life and in art.

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(Re)-Attaching Truth to the Physical Realities of the Universe: Antonin Artaud and J.M.G. Le Clézio's Philosophical Quest

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Disenchanted by the artifice, sterility, and intellectual myopia of Western society, the tortured artist Antonin Artaud and the Franco-Mauritian writer J.M.G. Le Clézio embarked upon philosophical quests in an effort to (re)-attach their fragmented consciousness to fundamental ontological realities from which there is no escape. A profound sense of cosmic alienation and existential malaise forced both writers to flee the modern world and its erroneous and misleading abstractions that have led the modern subject further from basic truths. Realizing that anthropocentric thought systems are predicated upon simplistic dualities, Manichean logic, and comforting illusions, Artaud and Le Clézio turned to traditional civilizations in a desperate attempt to understand what existence truly entails for an ephemeral being that is inextricably linked to a greater life force that constantly evolves to generate new life. Cognizant that no substance exists in a sort of cosmic vacuum completely isolated from other particles of matter and that all notions of existential superiority are founded upon arbitrary distinctions that are antithetical to the human condition and the physical realities of the universe, both authors attempt to (re)-discover their small place in the larger biotic community of life.

The purpose of this intertextual study is to explore the philosophical crisis which implored Artaud and Le Clézio to seek a remedy for their immeasurable anguish in the form of a more realistic worldview that accurately articulates what it means to live in an interconnected and interdependent relationship with the rest of the biosphere. Although numerous critics have noted the influence of Artaud's writings upon Le Clézio, these comparisons have been rather superficial in nature. Thus, this investigation endeavors to probe common threads between these two extremely divergent writers in a more systematic fashion. Moreover, this exploration will also elucidate that a deep existential void and a loss of cosmic identity compelled both authors to reject Western society and its homocentic, materialistic values.

Describing the existential pain and alienation from which Artaud appeared to suffer his entire life, Louis Sass affirms, "Body, mind, and external reality: all seem distant, uncoordinated, unreal. He lives instead with a chronic ontological nausea, always on the brink of some vaguely sensed and ineffable, yet horrifying devestation" (76). The intense cerebral anguish to which Sass refers is a by-product stemming from the narcissistic delusions of grandeur of a species that has become so self-absorbed that it has conveniently forgotten the universal laws which govern the fleeting existence of every sentient creature. Underscoring this "enjeu existentiel," Guy Dureau asserts that the voyage of self discovery which motivated Artaud's travels reflects an attempt to "dissiper le profond dégoût ressenti à l'égard de cette obscurantiste et philistine culture occidentale qui, faite de mots et de concepts, a perdu toute prise sur la réalité de la vie" (92).

Indoctrinated from birth by complex abstract concepts which ironically are often entirely incompatible with even a basic understanding of how the universe operates, the modern subject often feels disconnected from a part of himself without being able to pinpoint the precise source of this cerebral turmoil. Explaining that healing this cosmic rupture is the impetus which fueled Artaud's vision of a "theater of cruelty," Bettina Knapp posits, "Western man today feels cut off from nature and from himself […] the drama *per se*, looked upon symbolically, is Creation, the enactment and reenactment of the pain man experiences as he is torn away from his original state of unity, from 'Mother Earth' […] As the story of Creation is enacted before him, the spectator is filled with nostalgia for the primordial connection which he had nearly forgotten" ("The Mystic's Utopia" 125-126). As Knapp notes, it is impossible to separate Artaud's works from the philosophical search that ultimately produced them. Indeed, Artaud's dramaturgical theory articulated in his most renowned text *The Theater and Its Double* should also be understood in the context of a fractured subject longing to (re)-establish a spiritual communion with the impersonal cosmic forces which represent the origin of all life.

Given the poignant cerebral trauma that concretizes the quotidian reality of many early LeClézian protagonists such as Adam Pollo, Roch, and Beaumont, several researchers have associated these initial narratives with those of French existentialists such as Camus, Sartre, and Malraux.[1] Similar to the searing pain that Artaud describes in his autobiographical writings, the anguish of countless alienated protagonists from Le Clézio's first works reflects a profound yet often nebulous sense of loss and displacement. In this vein, Jean-Paul Mezade identifies the source of Adam Pollo's distress and inability to project any semblance of meaning upon his absurd existence as being emblematic of a severed being that possesses only a "certaine mémoire de la matière" (50). The aforementioned, anthropocentric abstractions based on wishful thinking rather than rigorous intellectual or scientific inquiry that are indicative of much of Western philosophy represent the root of the problem as opposed to the solution.

For this reason, Bruno Thibault elucidates that Le Clézio's diverse characters incessantly flee "les concepts, et les systèmes abstraits qui conditionnent la vie moderne pour renouer contact avec le milieu naturel et la réalité matérielle qui nous entoure" (*La*

Métaphore Exotique 40). As Thibault correctly affirms, Le Clézio's protagonists reside on the periphery of society or sometimes even quite far removed from the globalized world not to escape reality but rather to understand humanity's small place in it to a greater extent. Expressing sentiments that are reminiscent of Thibault's interpretation of the Franco-Mauritian author's *œuvre*, Gérard de Cortanze asserts, "sa littérature n'est pas une littérature d'évasion, mais de recherche" (17). Fully aware that possible answers to rudimentary existential questions like "Who am I?" and "What am I" are much more complex than simplistic notions such as Descartes's *bête machine* theory would have one believe, many protagonists from the early stage of the Nobel Laureate's career intuitively realize that occidental ideology conceals bittersweet truths instead of revealing them. As the author himself explains in an interview with De Cortanze in reference to both Western ideology and the European educational system, "la société dans laquelle j'ai grandi, européenne, teintée du léger décalage de l'éducation mauricienne et d'un substrat breton très ancien, ne tend pas à former des jeunes gens dans cette ligne-là. Elle leur demande, au contraire, d'oublier totalement que le monde existe. Un jour, le monde leur tombe dessus ils sont très étonnés" (20-21). Le Clézio illustrates that many of the elaborate, artificial, and theoretical systems that Western civilization has created to enrich our appreciation of human existence and to increase our erudition have backfired to the point of rendering the modern subject incapable of recognizing the most basic material realities of the world in which we live.

Affirming that the modern, urbanized world in which an individual no longer has a primordial relationship with the cosmic forces that sustain all life has become a "vaste cage à singes," Le Clézio explains, "je fuyais la vie agressive des grandes villes, à la recherche de quelque chose que j'ignorais […] D'une certain façon, j'attendais de rencontrer quelque chose, ou quelqu'un, qui me permettrait de sortir de mes obsessions et de trouver une paix intérieure" (*La Fête chantée* 237; 11). Thai culture and Buddhism originally nourished the Franco-Mauritian author's nomadic philosophical quest during his stay in Bangkok as a "coopérant,"[2] an influence which is clearly evident in his early narratives such as *Le Livre des fuites*, but Le Clézio would ultimately discover the ontological truths for which he had been searching because of his extensive contacts with Amerindian civilizations (Meyer 36). These sustained living experiences with numerous autochthonous Mexican civilizations in addition to his sojourn with the Emberas and Waunanas in the Darien region of Panama from 1970-1974 would profoundly transform Le Clézio and his writings. Although the author does not idealize these indigenous societies as he clearly articulates in a recent interview with Maya Jaggi from the British newspaper *The Guardian*, these encounters would help the young writer ascertain the source of his cerebral malaise. Asserting in the opening lines of *La Fête chantée* that his entire *Weltanschauung* would forever be altered by Amerindian philosophy, Le Clézio reveals that this artistic project is an attempt to verbalize an "expérience qui a changé toute ma vie, mes idées sur le monde et sur l'art, ma façon d'être avec les autres, de marcher, de manger, d'aimer, de dormir, et jusqu'à mes rêves" (9). Given that Le Clézio's contacts with divergent Amerindian peoples undoubtedly concretize the nexus of an existential search that would ultimately come to fruition, this study will focus on the so-called "Indian texts" (Waelti-Walters 107).

Similar to Le Clézio, a quest for truth rather than an effort to elude reality was the impetus that compelled Artaud to seek answers to life's most rudimentary questions far from the confines of Western civilization. Although he would spend much less time with the Tarahumara in the Sierra Madre in comparison to Le Clézio's aforementioned extended travels and it is even debatable whether Artaud actually ever made this trip at all,[3] it is clear that naïve escapism was not what fueled the tormented author's metaphysical pursuit. Justifying his motivations and the purity of his intentions, Artaud reveals to a Tarahumara priest, "Je lui dis que je n'étais pas venu chez les Tarahumaras en curieux mais pour retrouver une Vérité qui échappe au monde de l'Europe et que sa Race avait conservée" (*Les Tarahumaras* 27).[4] Reiterating that the incongruity between homocentric Western ideology and the material realities of the universe is the veritable origin of his immense anguish, Artaud confesses, "Certes, je n'étais pas venu au fond de la montagne de ces Indiens Tarahumaras pour chercher des souvenirs de peinture. J'avais assez souffert, il me semble, pour être payé par un peu de réalité" (49). Given that Occidental society attempts to conceal unpleasant facts with enticing yet illusory ideology designed to transcend material reality, the modern subject must strip away thick layers of simplistic anthropocentric logic to (re)-approach fundamental truths that are self-evident to many indigenous communities.

Referring to "le Comment et le Pourquoi des principes et des explosions primitives de la Nature," the author states, "Dans la montagne tarahumara tout ne parle que l'Essentiel, c'est-à-dire des principes suivant lesquels la Nature s'est formée; et tout ne vit que pour ces principes : les Hommes, les orages, le vent, le silence, le soleil" (72; 72). Artaud observes that the Tarahumara are instinctively aware of the cosmogonic origins of all life forms given their close connection to the natural world. Cognizant that every organism is arbitrarily thrown into the chaos of existence by impersonal cosmic forces that predate human beings and which will probably exist after the ultimate demise of our species, the Tarahumara realize that the universe has no center. Elemental matter and energy never truly disappear, but they incessantly change shapes in order to generate new life.[5] These astute observations of the inner workings of the biosphere in addition to modern science[6] refute simplistic notions of human superiority and the right of one organism to exercise control over the rest of the planet. Knowing that the ongoing evolutionary processes of the earth do not respect artificial existential categories such as 'human' and 'animal,' both Le Clézio and Artaud were seeking a less myopic worldview that more accurately articulates the symbiotic rapport between homo sapiens and the rest of the material universe. By placing our species in a sharply distinct ontological category from the remainder of the ecosphere, Western society has effectively eliminated any meaningful way for the modern subject to relate to the larger community of life to which everything is connected. Haunted by a faint but disquieting sense of displacement from the cosmic whole, Le Clézio and Artaud began their philosophical journey to find their small place in the larger mystery of existence by first (re)-discovering the earth.

Far from "la coalition infernale des êtres qui ont accaparé et pollué la conscience comme ils désordonnent la Réalité," both writers encountered cultures where the Indian voice was still alive and well (*Les Tarahumaras* 101). In reference to D.H. Lawrence and

Antonin Artaud, J.G. Brotherston explains, "it was the blighting product of a continent whose traditions and philosophy-Humanism, Rationalism, and the 'superstition of progress'-man must escape in order to save himself. While claiming to enhance man's status in the world, the Renaissance had in reality diminished him in the cosmos" (182). Brotherston further elucidates,

> True revolution was impossible without the discovery of 'living culture' and Mexico was one of the last places, if not the last, to find it. And in this respect they both felt post-revolutionary Mexican politicians to be a disappointment, since they were failing to awaken the 'Indian spirit' interred in their country […] Despite centuries of miscegenation between diverse American tribes, and with Europe, they saw such a culture lying intact […] Both dreamed of a fuller society in which the blood sun-wisdom of the Mexican Indians, knowable through their literature and directly, would redeem man (182; 187).

As Brotherston notes, Artaud's fascination with the Mexican Revolution is inseparable from his philosophical quest of (re)-connecting modern man to the cosmos. For Artaud, the only path to existential redemption which could heal the festering sores of cosmic alienation is to revalorize ecocentric autochthonous thought. Artaud's philosophical revolution entails a spiritual (re)-awakening, an intellectual purification, and a deep understanding of the universe including humanity's place in it.

Decades after Artaud's brief stay in the Sierra Madre with the Tarahumaras, Le Clézio discovered that the fragile Amerindian voice still resonated throughout Mexico. Although much of the country has embraced the materialistic virtues of the industrialized world, vibrant indigenous cultures in various regions of Mexico have been able to resist integration into the global village. As Raymond Cadorel explains in the context of Le Clézio's fiction, "Le Mexique reste une terre privilégiée, où la voix indienne-en dehors de tout folklore-peut encore être perçue, mais il est vrai aussi que cette voix risque de s'éteindre bientôt" (79). For the Franco-Mauritian author, this privileged space is vital to the future aspirations of all humanity given that the thought systems of these traditional peoples counterpoint simplistic homocentric ideology that threatens to destroy the ecological equilibrium that sustains life itself. In a universe visibly scarred by centuries of endless exploitation, the immense erudition of Amerindian societies, whose spiritual and political leaders foretold the environmental crisis because of their profound comprehension of the biosphere and its cycles, must finally be valorized. Realizing that the complete disappearance of Amerindian philosophy and wisdom could be the final nail in the coffin which ultimately seals humanity's fate, an essential aspect of Le Clézio's entire literary project is to ensure that this faint echo continues to reverberate even in a very rigid intellectual landscape.

In *Le Rêve Mexicain*, described by Paul Archambault as "perhaps the best and most controversial of Le Clézio's 'Mexican' works," the Nobel Laureate affirms, "Malgré le désastre de la Conquête, malgré la destruction annoncée par les augures, cette force n'a pas cessé d'exister […] malgré l'abîme du temps et de la destruction […] leur musique

et leur parole peuvent encore nous émouvoir, en un temps où la fête païenne n'est plus qu'un souvenir lointain dans l'inconscient de notre mémoire" (290; 144-147). Realizing that what has been decimated can never be fully recovered, Le Clézio expresses the sincere hope in *Le Rêve Mexicain* that enough fragments of autochthonous knowledge and cosmic sensibilities remain in order to save the human race from rapacious consumerist desires. The author urges modern society to conserve the precious traces of the Amerindian "rêve d'un autre monde, d'un autre temps [..] (qui) laisse en nous une trace indélébile […] d'une civilisation perdue à tout jamais" (212). Moreover, Le Clézio muses about how these remnants could enrich Western society and deviate its destructive course. As the writer explains, "Aujourd'hui, malgré le gouffre qui nous sépare de ces cultures, nous pouvons imaginer ce qu'elles auraient créé […] L'on peut imaginer l'importance que cette évolution aurait pu avoir pour le monde, comment elle aurait pu changer les concepts européens de spiritualité, l'idée de l'homme, de la morale, de la politique" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 243). The cautiously optimistic tone of this passage underscores both why the Amerindian voice is so relevant and how it could be the key to (re)-conceptualizing modernity.

Additionally, indigenous worldviews, based upon centuries of meticulous observations of the universe, could potentially help Western society to dismiss simplistic logic inherited from Renaissance humanism and Cartesian dualities. Not only has the planet been placed in serious peril because of anthropocentric ideology, but fundamental ontological truths have also fallen by the wayside due to misguided fantasies. Although the universe and the physical laws that govern it defy purely abstract hierarchies that are a product of wishful thinking, Renaissance humanism provided the greatest philosophical delusion of all by placing one species at the center of existence. As Bruno Thibault notes, "le rationalisme européen produit un humanisme étriqué et néfaste : d'une part parce qu'il place l'homme au centre de l'univers et prive la nature de la place qui lui revient" (*La Métaphore Exotique* 31).

In all of the Amerindian texts, Le Clézio juxtaposes occidental homocentric intellectual paradigms to more realistic thought systems that emphasize cosmic interdependency, unity, and chaos. Presenting the Amerindian *Weltanschauung*, the author elucidates, "L'homme indien n'est pas le maître du monde […] il a été détruit plusieurs fois par des cataclysmes successifs" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 229). Realizing that all attempts to impose a definitive order upon the universe are ephemeral in addition to the fact that all species arbitrarily appear in a given form from primordial forces that are beyond anyone's control, "ils ne veulent pas conquérir le monde […] Instinctivement, l'homme indien élimine tout ce qui le sépare, tout ce qui le rend supérieur" (*Haï* 152). Espousing biotic egalitarianism rather than a superiority complex predicated upon theoretical constructs that are in stark opposition to reality,

> L'indien n'est pas séparé du monde, il ne veut pas de la rupture entre les règnes. L'homme est vivant sur la terre, à l'égal des fourmis et des plantes, il n'est pas exilé de son territoire. Les forces magiques ne sont pas le privilège de la seule espèce humaine […] L'homme a peut-être dominé la création par ses techniques agricoles et par ses ruses de chasse, mais il est regardé par les forces surnaturelles comme les autres êtres (*Haï* 111-112).

Instead of relying upon faulty but comforting homocentric logic to offer answers to rudimentary existential questions and to provide meaning, the Amerindian civilizations with whom Le Clézio lived are able to accept their smallness in the larger scheme of life.[7] Cognizant that a cataclysmic event similar to the one that originally set various cycles in motion thereby creating human beings and every organism could one day generate another clean slate, traditional autochthonous communities reject anthropocentric notions that are far removed from inconvenient truths.

For Artaud, indigenous Mexico also represents a privileged intellectual and spiritual space whose inhabitants have not forgotten basic ontological realities. Decrying Western society and highlighting the shamanic[8] experiences which profoundly altered his perception, Artaud asserts, "C'est un dimanche matin que le vieux chef indien m'ouvrit la conscience d'un coup de glaive entre la rate et le cœur […] J'en éprouvai aucune douleur mais j'eus en effet l'impression de me réveiller à quelque chose à quoi jusqu'ici j'étais mal né et orienté du mauvais côté, et je me sentis rempli d'une lumière que je n'avais jamais possédée" (14). The author explains that the bittersweet existential epiphanies triggered by this sacred rite are much more traumatic than the physical anguish itself. Painfully aware of the same abstract distortions of reality as Le Clézio which are indicative of Western metaphysics, Artaud attempts to loosen the cerebral shackles that prevent him from (re)-connecting to the cosmos and himself.

Realizing that any sort of simplistic ideology which places one particular species on an ontological pedestal as members of an elite race designed to govern all of creation is antithetical to material realities, Artaud reveals, "la Renaissance du XVI^{e} siècle […] et l'Humanisme de la Renaissance ne fut pas un agrandissement mais une diminution de l'homme, puisque l'Homme a cessé de s'élever jusqu'à la nature pour ramener la nature à sa taille à lui, et la considération exclusive de l'humain a fait perdre le Naturel" (73-74). Noting that the organic cycles of the earth indiscriminately created all life, the writer further explains, "cette Nature […] Comme elle a *évolué* des hommes, elle a également *évolué* des rochers" (42). Artaud is struck by the realization that the rudimentary laws of the universe apply to every sentient and non-sentient being that inhabits this planet. Similar to the aforementioned distinct Amerindian civilizations of which Le Clézio has a deep understanding, Artaud observes that the Tarahumara embrace their cosmic smallness knowing that transcendence from the same primordial cycles that breathed life into them and every other creature is impossible.

Instead of creating artificial paradises that await believers after the end of their fleeting existence on this earth, the path to spirituality, existential meaning, and salvation entails reducing the distance that separates one from the cosmic whole to the greatest extent possible for numerous autochthonous civilizations. Fully aware and able to accept the reality that promises of immortality in a given form which serve as the basis of Western monotheistic religions are purely theoretical and speculative, many indigenous spiritual paradigms urge the subject to (re)-establish a more intimate rapport with the chaotic forces that link all species together in a complex, interconnected web. Although Western ideology and its simplistic dichotomies separates the spiritual and material realms thereby proposing a radically different remedy for existential anguish

related to the absurdity of the human condition, pantheistic belief systems are predicated upon a profound comprehension of the biosphere and one's place in it. As opposed to concealing or softening material truths, the mystical worldviews of many traditional societies compel the individual to communicate directly with the natural world to which everything is connected.

Rejecting the abstract nature of occidental existential cures that are unable to offer him any solace or even temporary relief from his cerebral trauma, Artaud's philosophical quest is also a spiritual journey. Highlighting that this sense of longing is reflected in the writer's dramaturgical theory, Guy Dureau notes that Artaud's fascination with "les forces cosmiques originelles" is emblematic of an effort to "établir des ponts entre l'humain et le divin" (90; 103). In sharp contrast with contemporary mainstream Western theology, Artaud discovers that the sacred and the profane inhabit the same physical space for the Tarahumara. The divine does not exist disconnected from quotidian reality in a realm far removed from this universe, but rather these indigenous peoples realize that they are part of a larger sacred mystery which they will never fully comprehend. Explaining that "Les Tarahumaras ne croient pas en Dieu et le mot 'Dieu' n'existe pas dans leur langue," Artaud clarifies "ils vivent matériellement près d'elle (la nature) […] parce qu'ils sont faits du même tissu que la Nature et que, comme toutes les manifestations authentiques de la Nature, ils sont nés d'un mélange premier" (76; 77). The physical and ideological barriers that Western society has erected to domesticate the remainder of the planet are antithetical to the conceptualization of divinity that the writer uncovers during his brief sojourn with the Tarahumara. Members of this rich culture have a difficult time conceiving why humankind would even wish to separate itself from the primordial soup that created and which sustains all abundant life given that their religion is *elemental*. A greater understanding of the planetary forces which transcend the needs and desires of one species fosters a more profound comprehension of oneself.

Although the European invaders mocked the spiritual beliefs of Native Americans upon their arrival in the new world, Artaud posits that pantheistic religions are much more compatible with scientific principles. Reiterating the nefarious effects of the Renaissance including the cosmic disconnect which haunts the modern subject, Artaud affirms, "Où ai-je déjà entendu que ce n'est pas en Italie mais au Mexique que les peintres d'avant la Renaissance ont pris le bleu de leurs paysages […] Les peintres italiens d'avant la Renaissance étaient initiés à une science secrète que la science moderne n'a pas encore complètement retrouvée" (71). Given that they venerated a sacred cosmic entity which they astutely observed in order to ascertain knowledge about themselves and the universe that spawned their species, it is not surprising that the Tarahumara and many other indigenous cultures were originally well in advance of their European counterparts in astronomy, astrology, ecology, and science in general. If he were still alive today, Artaud would be happy that modern researchers have made tremendous strides since his untimely demise. However, despite the fact that contemporary ecologists and quantum physicists have validated many of the very ideas at which the ethnocentric *conquistadores* scoffed, Western forms of spirituality

have changed very little to reflect ecological truths. Thus, free thinkers like Artaud continue to deconstruct the shaky edifice upon which Western metaphysics and theology is constructed. Until occidental thought systems evolve to match what recent scientific discoveries have proven, modern man's search for the truth will never be fulfilled.

Similar to Artaud, Le Clézio explains that by dividing "la matérialiste et "la spiritualiste," Western society inadvertently produced both a fragmentation of consciousness and knowledge (Lovichi 120). Detached from a part of themselves and reality, early Leclézian anti-heroes struggle to create any lasting semblance of meaning. As Sevket Kadioglu asserts, "Il ne sera pas déconcertant de dire que les protagonistes des romans de la première période de Le Clézio souffrent d'une angoisse due à l'inadaptation au monde auquel ils appartiennent" (125). Kadioglu further elucidates, "cette société destructive a rompu le lien de l'homme avec la réalité en séparant le matériel du spirituel et l'esprit, de la nature qui ne peuvent mettre en œuvre la pensée quand ils ne font qu'un" (128). With no realistic frame of reference for conceptualizing the world and their relation to it outside of misleading, anthropocentric abstractions, Adam Pollo, Roch, Beaumont, François Besson, and numerous other Leclézian protagonists are unable to fill their deep existential void. Le Clézio's later characters will choose the same spiritual path that has edified traditional civilizations ever since the first humans appeared on this earth. In order to project meaning upon their absurd existence, Alexis, Lalla, Laïla, and other protagonists from the second half of the Franco-Mauritian author's career delve deeply into the sacred earth to experience life more fully. Indeed, this elemental communion between the subject and the object seems to have dissolved the searing cerebral pain that often paralyzed earlier Leclézian characters.

The appearance of this ontological and epistemological remedy in his fiction is clearly the result of the author's extensive contacts with Amerindian civilizations that significantly altered his worldview. Whereas "le monde moderne s'est accoutume à séparer la nature et la pensée," "Ce lien charnel qui unissait les Indiens à leur terre est le principe même du *containment* et du contrat terrestre énoncés par les écologistes tels que Theodore Taylor ou Charles Humpstone" (*La Fête chantée* 187). Le Clézio reveals that Amerindian societies do not compartmentalize knowledge into isolated boxes or separate thought from nature. For the autochthonous societies with whom the author spent a considerable amount of time, true erudition is entwined with understanding the cosmos. Moreover, all Amerindian thought systems coalesce given that they share the same goal of facilitating a greater comprehension of the planet and oneself.

Although science often competes and conflicts with faith as the arbiter of truth in Western civilization because of the hypothetical nature of mainstream occidental religious beliefs, Le Clézio underscores the remarkable cohesiveness that is indicative of Amerindian spirituality, philosophy, and science. As the writer indicates in *Le Rêve Mexicain*, "Mais à la différence des Européens, que la science opposa à la religion, les astronomes amérindiens concevaient un plan entièrement dédié aux cultes des dieux" (254). By worshipping the very substance that their scientists also study, the Franco-Mauritian author asserts that the entire Amerindian way of life reflects "un système de

pensée cohérent, c'est-à-dire véritablement […] une philosophie" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 257). Perhaps stoically accepting the only realities of which an individual can be certain in addition to one's epistemological limitations, as much Amerindian wisdom unequivocally suggests, is what allows Le Clézio's later protagonists to find an intellectual equilibrium and serenity that eluded his earlier tortured characters. Many of the complex theoretical abstractions that Western society initially created to maximize human happiness and prosperity are so divorced from fundamental ecological realities that the modern subject has completely lost his existential bearings given that he now possesses only faded reminiscences of the cosmic forces that brought him to life.

As peculiar as it might initially sound, the landscape itself was perhaps the greatest existential remedy that Artaud and Le Clézio would experience in different regions of indigenous Mexico. In a remote and rather inaccessible corner of Northwest Mexico, Artaud would immediately be struck by both the splendor and cruelty of the topography of the Sierra Madre. As André Spears asserts, "The Tarahumara landscape functions as a text in which all nature-the cosmos itself-speaks to humankind" (20). Removed from materialistic Western society that tends to conceptualize the rest of the cosmos from a strictly utilitarian point of view, Artaud realizes that the earth itself possesses the 'signs' for which he had been seeking. By (re)-establishing a direct, sensorial contact with nature, Artaud is now aware that separation from elemental matter is impossible. Moreover, the biosphere itself holds the key to unraveling the enigmas concerning the universal saga of humanity and every creature that has ever inhabited this planet. Highlighting the notion of cosmic history, actuated by epiphanic revelations in the mountains of the Sierra Madre, which permeates Artaud's entire *œuvre*, Julie Peters notes,

> Both humans and events here are functions of the landscape […] In the rush of metaphors of sublime nature that alone seem sufficient to express the sublime violence of cataclysmic historical events as they unfold in space, the human and natural landscapes become indistinguishable […] In the intermingling of body and landscape we can see Artaud's general erasure of the divide between the realm of (human) symbolic agency and the nonintentional realm of objects (natural or otherwise). The human body itself is part of the cosmic symbolic system (233-234).

Although the pervasive puritanical ideology of occidental civilization cautions us to be wary of succumbing to the temptations of our 'weak flesh,' Artaud affirms that it is our corporality which allows a subject to relate in a meaningful way to the larger cosmic body to which all substances are linked. In a sterile atmosphere epitomized by suppression of sensorial pleasure and misguided efforts to transcend cosmic reality itself, the modern subject has forgotten that he is interwoven into the object whose veritable essence he denies.

Attempting to articulate into words the ontological revelations that he intuitively internalizes by touching, tasting, feeling, hearing, and smelling the Sierra Madre landscape, Artaud confides in a letter to his friend Jean Paulhan, "Arrivé en plein cœur

de la montagne Tarahumara j'ai été saisi de réminiscences physiques, tellement puissantes qu'elle me parurent rappeler des souvenirs personnels directs; tout: la vie de la terre et de l'herbe, en bas, les découpures de la montagne, les formes particulières des rochers" (113). Artaud's direct contact with a topographical space that resists complete domestication appears to reanimate his dim but poignant cosmic memory of the elemental forces that would eventually create humanity after billions of years and innumerable cataclysms. Expressing an intense and mystical feeling of *déjà vu* initiated by a close communion with the mineral realm, Artaud explains, "tout me parut représenter une expérience vécue […] Tout cela n'était pas nouveau. Or l'impression du *déjà vu* est vague, je veux dire sans date […] car cette expérience organique vécue […] C'étaient des réminiscences d'histoire qui venaient à moi, rocher par rocher, herbe par herbe, horizon par horizon" (113). Artaud's realizes that the story of the earth cannot be confined into the *history* of one species that appeared ages after life had already begun. Additionally, the artificial and arbitrary nature of Western conceptions of time have produced a temporal disconnect from the physical realities of the universe. Traditional societies that have maintained a primordial rapport with their land do not suffer from the delusion that the social construct we call time began with the first humans. The Tarahumara landscape reveals to Artaud this ecocentric and scientific truth concealed by anthropocentric occidental logic.

Decades after Artaud's travels to indigenous Mexico, the cosmos itself would also speak to Le Clézio. Elucidating that Mexico is truly a privileged spiritual and existential space in a section of *Le Rêve Mexicain* aptly entitled "Antonin Artaud ou le rêve mexicain," the author declares, "Le Mexique est une terre de rêves. Je veux dire, une terre faite d'une vérité différente, d'une réalité différente. Pays de lumière extrême, pays de violence, où les passions essentielles sont plus visibles et où la marque de l'antique histoire de l'homme est plus sensible" (214). After philosophically musing "Qu'est-ce qui fait du Mexique un des lieux privilégiés du mystère [..] un lieu où le moment même de la création paraît encore proche alors que déjà s'annonce, inexplicablement, l'autre moment suprême, celui de la destruction du monde ?," Le Clézio speculates, "Est-ce la nature même du pays, terre de volcans, de déserts, de hauts plateaux si proches du ciel et du soleil […] par opposition à l'antiquité des terres d'Europe, formées par l'homme, soumises à son usage jusqu'à la stérilité parfois" (214). Although the Franco-Mauritian author deconstructs simplistic notions of an unspoiled virgin territory as nothing more than a dream, he also expresses that rugged landscapes with a much lighter ecological footprint than modern urban areas remind us of our smallness in nature. Places in which matter itself has yet to be radically transformed by human beings are a clear example that cosmic elements cannot be fully appropriated or mastered. Moreover, the repetition of the word "vérité" in this passage should not be taken lightly. For both Artaud and Le Clézio, a basic realization of the uncontrollable fury of planetary forces, such as volcanoes and earthquakes, fosters intellectual humility.[9] Although this cosmic modesty mirrors fundamental ontological truths that dictate the existence of every ephemeral being that has ever roamed this planet, Western ideology has obscured these material realities with imaginary, egomaniacal fictions.

Reiterating how each divergent Amerindian civilization with whom he resided helped him to (re)-connect to the earth, himself, and rudimentary truths, Le Clézio lauds both the radiant beauty of Indian women and their physical surroundings,

Ce sont les femmes, surtout. Elles sont si belles, si émouvantes […] elles portent enelles, à chaque instant de leur vie, dans le moindre de leurs gestes, une force qui semblevenir du plus profond du temps, et qui les unit au lieu qui les a créées […] Leur beautéest indifférente aux transformations du monde alentour […] Le pouvoir de ces endroitspeut seul nous changer, parce qu'il nous fait connaître la vérité du monde, sonenchantement (*La Fête chantée* 199-200).

The Nobel Laureate deeply admires the attributes of Amerindian women because they are a manifestation of the material landscape that propelled every sentient being into the chaos of existence. The beauty to which Le Clézio refers in this passage is not a sexually charged superficial appreciation of female corporality, but instead it is the cosmos itself which is the veritable origin of the author's attraction. Furthermore, the author's homage to "les femmes indiennes" is indicative of his reverence for the truth and his disdain for artifice. What impresses Le Clézio the most about Native American women is the existential reality that they represent. These indigenous women shine brightly like the truth that illuminates humankind allowing one to experience life more fully.

In addition to the topography itself of traditional Mexico, their initiation into shamanism by Amerindian spiritual leaders is also a salient feature of Artaud and Le Clézio's philosophical quest. Expressing deep sensibilities that are similar to many traditional forms of Amerindian spirituality, both authors would seek ontological meaning by (re)-establishing an intimate relationship with the terrestrial sublime. As Raymond Cadorel explains, "C'est une communion de nature religieuse que cherche Le Clézio […] C'est aussi renoncer à l'anthropocentrisme occidental, revenir à une conception cosmique de l'homme, au mariage du ciel et de la terre" (74; 88). The elemental nuptials[1010] This term is used in the same sense as Albert Camus employs it in the essays that comprise the collection *Noces*. For a brief, intertextual discussion of the pantheistic euphoria in the essays of Le Clézio and Camus, see Moser, Keith. "Rending Moments of Material Ecstasy in the Meditative Essays of Two Nobel Laureates: Le Clézio and Camus." *Romance Notes* 49 (1): 13-21. or pantheistic communion described by Cadorel is a leitmotif that pervades Le Clézio's entire corpus. Highlighting the author's notion that the traces of decimated Amerindian cultures which remain could allow the modern subject to (re)-discover the universe and himself, Bruno Thibault asserts, " la littérature comme le chant chamanique indien […] est une réponse aux maux et aux tensions qui hantent la société" ("Le Chant de l'abîme" 44). If the Amerindian voice vanishes completely, the potential remedy for the existential anguish that it represents could lead to a spiritual death for which no cure exists.

Underscoring the resilience of traditional shamanic beliefs that have somehow survived despite centuries of systematic persecution, Le Clézio elucidates, "Sorcier, médecin, astrologue, le chamane est le symbole du contact direct avec l'au-delà. Il est

le devin, celui qui guérit ou qui ensorcelle […] Mais plutôt que cette magie noire, c'est un système de pensée particulier qui inspire le chamanisme […] c'est l'esprit chamanique qui est resté vivace dans la pensée indienne" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 246-248). Although much of Amerindian culture has been forever lost, the author notes that the mystical worldview which is the foundation of shamanic spiritual paradigms still thrives. Moreover, Le Clézio criticizes ethnocentric ideology which has reduced the complexity and richness of Amerindian shamanism to nothing but 'black magic.' This unflattering assessment is an oversimplification if not a blatant misrepresentation of Native American religious thought.

Affirming that the divergent autochthonous cultures of the Americas have much to offer the modern world in dire need of a radical paradigm shift, the author attempts to resuscitate the fragments of the ecocentric and cohesive worldview of these conquered peoples in *Le Rêve Mexicain*. Unable to grasp the deeper symbolic meaning of Amerindian religious ceremonies, the European invaders often ridiculed sacred rites that they perceived to be outlandish superstitions. However, Le Clézio notes that every Amerindian spiritual practice was intentionally designed to foster a greater understanding of the physical realities of the universe and an individual subject's place in it. Proposing that the aforementioned unity of all Amerindian thought systems explains why these customs have been able to avoid extinction, the writer reveals, "malgré l'abolition du clergé et de l'autorité politique indigène, malgré l'interdit des cérémonies et la destruction des temples, les anciens rituels de curation chamanique purent survivre […] Dans la plupart des sociétés indigènes du Mexique […] les rites […] sont maintenus, parce qu'ils exprimaient la continuité du mode de pensée indigène, symbolique et incantatoire, une autre façon de percevoir le réel" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 248). Given that Western abstractions created to provide meaning sometimes have little basis in reality, it is not surprising that non-anthropocentric spiritual paradigms have managed to survive since they are perhaps more realistic than hypothetical paradises.[11]

The alienated modern subject intuitively realizes that the relationship between his species and the material world to which he is linked is much more complex than homocentric logic posits. Cognizant that the elaborate, alluring fictions that divide human beings from elemental matter and which justify utter hegemonic domination over the rest of the biosphere are chimerical fantasies but presented with no alternative, Le Clézio's early protagonists are intellectual nomads in search of truth and authenticity. Shamanism in its purest form as a "religion d'extase," predicated upon a direct communion with the cosmic forces that generated all life, is a valid point of departure for (re)-conceptualizing the rapport between humankind and nature which seems to allow the author's later characters to find happiness and inner contentment (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 200).

Summarizing the primordial lessons that he learned in the Darien region of Panama from 1970-1974, Le Clézio reveals,

> Je découvris, au long de ces mois et de ces années, ce qui était le respect de la nature, non pas une idée abstraite, mais une réalité : le bon usage des plantes et des animaux […] Ce que je découvrais ainsi, c'était l'intelligence de l'univers, son évidence, sa sensibilité. La relation étroite qui unit les êtres humains non seulement au monde qui les entoure, mais aussi au monde invisible, aux songes, à l'origine de la création (*La Fête chantée* 15).

Although the Nobel Laureate adamantly insists in a lengthy interview with Keith Moser[12] that he is not a militant environmental crusader, it is evident that the author clearly advocates a "healthier approach to ecology" (Jaggi n.p.). Aware of the undeniable reality that the earth sustains all life on this planet including humans, Amerindian civilizations realize that wreaking havoc on limited natural resources upon which all organisms depend is a narcissistic, self-destructive act that could prefigure the end of life itself. These basic realities which homocentric Western society has attempted to undermine or even dismiss entirely with faulty logic explain the apocalyptic tone of Le Clézio's recent narratives such as "Pawana." The shamanic initiations which the author describes alongside his spiritual guide "Colombie"[13] in "Le génie datura" and *La Fête chantée* are emblematic of the necessity of (re)-establishing a direct correspondence with the most rudimentary reality of all: matter.

Similar to the shamanic experiences that Le Clézio depicts during his stay with the Emberas and Waunanas which would profoundly alter him and his subsequent writings, sacred Tarahumara rituals would also allow Antonin Artaud to (re)-connect himself directly to the organic cycles that breathed life into everything that exists. During these mystical trances, visions, and hallucinations to the so-called 'other side' which entailed the usage of the mind-altering substance peyote,[14] Artaud was struck by intense ontological epiphanies that would at times destabilize him. As Bettina Knapp explains, "Artaud established direct contact with the Tutuguri (the Sun) […] therefore opening the unlimited and inhabited ways of the cosmos […] and suddenly knew his Self, so brutally dismembered by European civilization that lives on art/artificiality […] at that moment was connected with the elements […] body and spirit worked in perfect harmony with the gods that emerged from the very elements-and were life itself" ("The Mystic's Utopia" 62). The pantheistic ecstasy and related trauma that Artaud experienced during the spiritual ceremonies in which he was invited to participate reminded him that all true knowledge is elemental. In order to find any semblance of truth and deep meaning, Artaud would need to shed his purely Western cloak and embrace both the euphoria and searing pain of what it means to reside temporarily in an interconnected, interdependent universe that has no true center.

Speaking directly to the reader and insisting that "Ces paroles du prêtre que je viens de rapporter sont absolument authentiques," Artaud recounts the epiphanic realizations induced by peyote administered by a Tarahumara priest (28). After accepting the shaman's invitation to "goûter à Ciguri moi-même et de me rapprocher ainsi de la Vérité que je cherchais," the author reveals, "Mais une vision que j'eus et qui me frappa fut déclarée *authentique* par le Prêtre et sa famille, celui qui doit être Ciguri et qui est Dieu. Mais on n'y parvient pas sans avoir traversé un déchirement et une angoisse, après quoi on se sent comme retourné et *reversé* de l'autre côté des choses et on ne

comprend plus le monde que l'on vient de quitter" (29). First, it should be noted that Artaud insists that his flight from occidental civilization is not an attempt to escape, but rather to (re)-discover the *Vérité* that eludes modern man trapped in a sterile, anthropocentric labyrinth of the mind.

Moreover, the ontological revelations facilitated by this vision are not always pleasant. Similar to the bittersweet realities highlighted by Le Clézio in his early seminal essay *L'Extase Matérielle* which predates his encounters with Amerindian civilizations,[15] Artaud would be struck by the ontological paradox that is indicative of the existence of every fleeting being. Although every organism is mortal and will one day perish, a complete death or disappearance from this earth is impossible because the basic building blocks of life and cosmic energy itself continually change their given temporary forms to regenerate both sentient and non-sentient entities. Corresponding with matter is a form of communicating with the divine, eternal forces that created the original spark thereby sending various cycles into motion. Thus, Artaud's search for truth outside the limitations of mainstream Western ideology including its philosophical and spiritual paradigms also leads him closer to God.

Despite his perplexing and sometimes even incoherent reflections in which he tries to reconcile Christianity with Tarahumara shamanism that he would later repudiate,[16] Artaud is clearly most drawn to the concept of terrestrial redemption. In stark contrast to contemporary monotheistic religions which affirm the existence of a paradise far removed from this earth created by a benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent deity, many pantheistic belief systems assert that the imperfect world in which we live is the only path to transcendence. For this reason, Artaud's literal and inner journeys are emblematic of an ontological and spiritual search for his place in a universe replete with splendor,[17] ugliness, and cruelty. In fact, Artaud's often misunderstood (re)-appropriation of the world 'cruelty' and the dramaturgical vision that he articulates in *The Theater and Its Double* are inseparable from the violent cosmogonic forces that cast everything into chaos. As Jean-Joseph Goux explains, Artaud's ideal "theater is destined to confront the dark forces" (18).

The deep cosmogonic symbolism of Tarahumara shamanic rituals would feed Artaud's fascination with the origins of the universe. Through primordial rituals, dances, chants, visions, and hallucinations designed to commune with elemental matter, Artaud hoped to unravel possible answers to the greatest existential questions of all. Convinced that the earth alone possessed the key to understanding what and who we are, Artaud embraced shamanic customs because of their focus on communicating with the chaos of which the human species constitutes merely a small fragment.[18] As Artaud elucidates in what is perhaps the most important essay of *Les Tarahumaras* "Le rite du peyotl chez les Tarahumaras" "le rite du Ciguri est un Rite de création et qui explique comment les choses *sont* dans le Vide et celui-ci dans l'Infini, et comment elles en sortirent dans la Réalité et furent faites" (23). In "La montagne des signes," a mystical vision would trigger a more profound comprehension of these same ontological and material realities. As the narrator declares, "Il n'était pas tout à fait midi quand je rencontrai cette vision

[…] Il me sembla partout lire […] une histoire de genèse et de chaos […] Pas une forme qui fût intacte, pas un corps qui ne m'apparut comme sorti d'un récent massacre, pas un groupe ou je n'aie dû lire la lutte qui le divisait. Je retrouvai des hommes noyés, à demi mangés par la pierre" (43-44). The peyote dance in addition to this intense trance would reveal to Artaud that every combination of particles including the human body bears a faint trace of the original cataclysmic event that gave birth to life. Moreover, each fragment of the larger cosmic whole is also a microcosm of the germ that will one day destroy the planet as we know it.

Numerous Le Clézio scholars, such as Bruno Thibault, Jean-Paul Mezade, and Claude Cavallero, have highlighted that the Franco-Mauritian author's fascination with cosmogony is a salient feature of his philosophical and spiritual quest as well. In the writer's fiction, several protagonists muse about a 'reverse voyage' to the precise instant in which life began in order to understand themselves and the world around them more fully. As Mezade underscores, many Leclézian characters seek "cet instant primordial, entre temps et non-temps […] jusqu'à l'état de chaos, jusqu'au stade embryonnaire" (153). In a similar vein, Thibault notes that recent works like "*Le Chercheur d'or* et *La Quarantaine* ne décrivent pas des voyages d'exploration ou de colonisation: ils décrivent des voyages initiatiques qui mènent à 'l'autre côté', c'est-à-dire à la découverte de la pensée primitive" in which "la répétition symbolique et rituelle de la cosmogonie" plays a fundamental role ("La Metaphore Exotique" 845; 846). Although this impossible dream never fully materializes into reality for most of the author's protagonists for obvious reasons with the possible exception of Naja Naja from *Voyages de l'autre côté* that can somehow inexplicably temporarily escape her ontological shell of being and transform into other forms of matter, the symbolism of this journey is paramount to understanding Le Clézio's philosophical search.

The Laureate's Amerindian texts reveal that cosmogony is the heart of the shamanic initiation to which Thibault refers. As Le Clézio asserts in *La Fête chantée*, "Le voyage initiatique forme, avec le thème de l'émergence, le mythe fondamental du monde amérindien. Il est étroitement lié aux croyances cosmogoniques des religions précolombiennes […] Le voyage initiatique du chaman est aussi l'accomplissement d'un cycle […] Descendre aux enfers, c'est retourner vers l'utérus de la terre-mère, où se cache le secret de toute vie" (175). For both Le Clézio and Artaud, the cosmogonic search is the most important philosophical quest of all given that this *voyage à rebours* is an effort to find definitive answers to fundamental ontological questions. However, although this direct contact with the impersonal cosmic forces that created all life could unravel the existential enigmas that have haunted innumerable civilizations since the appearance of the first human beings on this planet, it should be noted that this initiation entails a considerable amount of suffering. In order to attain a state of serenity, the subject of shamanic ecstasy must find descend into an infernal abyss. Indeed, Le Clézio also articulates the 'dark mysticism' that is inherent in Amerindian philosophy and forms of spirituality.

In Western terms, there is no 'heaven' outside of 'hell' and vice versa in many indigenous thought systems. In both *Le Rêve Mexicain* and *La Fête chantée*, Le Clézio

elucidates that the often misunderstood Amerindian concept of 'Mother Earth' is much more nuanced than the European invaders realized. As the author explains, "Ce rôle à la fois bénéfique et maléfique de la terre-mère, créatrice des hommes et maîtresse de la mort […] Le symbole d'une terre-mère à la fois nourricière et mortelle est au centre de la philosophie amérindienne […] Le monde qui les entourait était beaucoup plus qu'un décor, il était l'expression d'une divinité" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 265-266). The cosmogonic voyage to the very core of Mother Earth where life originally surged is not a reflection of a naïve, utopian worldview, but this philosophical and spiritual journey is instead emblematic of a profound understanding of a cosmic entity that sustains life but which will one day indiscriminately take it away.

For this reason, during what the writer describes as "Le moment le plus intense de la vie des Emberas et des Waunanas […] Beka, la fête chantée," the shamanic leader attempts to "entrer en relation avec les forces du mal" (*La Fête chantée* 17; 18). This passage illustrates that although Le Clézio's quest for intellectual equilibrium and a deeper appreciation of his own ephemeral existence would begin to take shape because of his experiences with various Amerindian civilizations, he would find no remedy that could completely efface the absurdity of the human condition from which his early protagonists greatly suffered. Nevertheless, the Franco-Mauritian author's later characters seem to be able to accept the physical realities of the universe from which no transcendence is possible and to find beauty and ontological significance in the unordered chaos. Moreover, the epiphanic instants of euphoria that his protagonists experience by communing with the cosmos reveal the gratuitous nature of human existence and negate unfounded anthropocentric ideology. Characters like Alexis, Lalla, and Juba endeavor to take advantage of every fleeting moment that life affords given their realization that "La vie sur la terre n'est qu'un bref instant entre le chaos initial et le chaos final" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 259). Fusing with the sacred material realm in an interconnected and interdependent universe sets them free from the chains of Western society that have attempted to obscure rudimentary truths. Elemental contact with primordial cosmic forces can revive the faint echo that compels the alienated modern subject to flee a pervasive intellectual landscape where enticing fantasies often overshadow reality.

Yet, despite the myriad of similarities between the two authors' philosophical and spiritual journeys, the fundamental ontological truths that Artaud discovered in the Sierra Madre never appear to have quelled the existential anguish from which he suffered until his untimely demise. Moreover, the pantheistic communion with other forms of matter that the rugged landscape and his initiation into shamanic rituals fostered is often eerily similar to the painful reminiscences triggered by the chestnut tree in Sartre's *La Nausée*. Articulating his frustration concerning the limitations of elemental nuptials, Artaud reveals, "Depuis ma première prise de contact avec cette terrible montagne dont je suis sûr qu'elle avait élevé contre moi des barrières pour m'empêcher d'entrer" (46). Aware that a complete fusion with the material world is impossible, Artaud ponders how much a subject can truly understand the universe and his place in it. Even if he is able to remove all of the physical and ideological obstacles that Western civilization has

erected that prevent one from having a meaningful relationship with the cosmos, to what extent can human life and existence in general be comprehended given that other material particles resist human appropriation? Summarizing the existential crisis that permeates his entire being on this 'terrible' mountain, Artaud asks himself these disconcerting questions, "Avais-je jamais connu la joie, y avait-il jamais eu au monde une sensation qui ne fût pas d'angoisse ou d'irrémissible désespoir […] Y avait-il pour moi quelque chose qui ne fût pas à la porte de l'agonie" (47). Instead of redeeming him from the poverty of the human condition, Artaud's mystical correspondences in the Sierra Madre sometimes seem to degenerate into the same *extase horrible* that paralyzes Antoine Roquentin.

Given the fact that Artaud never appears to have found any sort of contentment or deep appreciation of life, numerous critics have noted that his existential quest forever remained unfulfilled. Underscoring how one of the aforementioned euphoric experiences went terribly wrong, Louis Sass explains, "Before long, Artaud's sense of cosmic transformation seems to have turned negative, his sense of mystical union undermined by an encroaching and all too familiar sense of ontological insecurity and catastrophe" (83). Concerning the aforementioned limitations of a perfect marriage with the natural world that clearly haunted Artaud, Sass concludes, "If it is a synthesis, it is one founded upon negation rather than reconciliation: all of the elements are there, but denied rather than affirmed" (88). Echoing similar sentiments, Kimberly Jannarone affirms, "He never writes of people being happy, and his dream for the individual is its dissolution, not its fuller articulation […] Artaud's prose relishes the carnage, pointing us away from any wishful interpretation of this as an imagined restorative event" (15; 42). As Jannarone highlights throughout her insightful and provocative monograph *Artaud and His Doubles*, perhaps the only existential remedy that the author would fully embrace is the yearning for another cataclysmic event that would annihilate humanity entirely. Does Artaud wish for the modern subject to live more authentically once again in harmony with the elements, or rather does he only envision ontological salvation through utter destruction of our species?

In *Le Rêve Mexicain*, Le Clézio offers a plausible explanation concerning why Artaud's experiences with the Tarahumaras were not able to dissipate the existential pain from which he suffered his entire life. As Le Clézio concludes, "Artaud ne trouve pas en réalité le Mexique qu'il cherche. Il ne le trouve que dans les livres […] Ainsi, de plus en plus, Artaud semble se refermer sur lui-même pour suivre son rêve de retour à l'âge d'or de l'empire Aztèque" (220-221). Whereas Le Clézio is aware that the notion of finding a "true culture" which has been "protected from occidental influences" is chimerical, Artaud appears to become lost in an impossible dream of resuscitating a lost civilization to its original grandeur (Boldt-Irons 124; Goux 19). Underscoring that an artist can only hope to preserve the traces of rich Amerindian cultures that managed to survive the conquest, Le Clézio laments, "Moins de cinquante ans après que culminait cette civilisation cruelle et poétique, ses chants furent couverts par le silence angoissé de la Conquête" (150). Although the Franco-Mauritian author attempts to re-animate

the Indian voice by picking up the pieces which could perhaps save humanity from an ecological and spiritual demise, Artaud appears to have never been able to confront the fact that a so-called "pure culture"[19] does not exist nor can a lost civilization be completely restored. Both authors would flee Western society in search of a more meaningful existence, but Le Clézio's philosophical quest seems to be more realistic and grounded in reality. Did the delusion of reviving indigenous Mexican cultures and restoring a world order that was turned upside down by the European invasion of the new world prevent Artaud from actualizing a state of contentment? By completely devoting himself to an unfeasible artistic project that could never come to fruition, was the tormented writer's spiritual and philosophical search doomed before it ever began?

In conclusion, Le Clézio and Artaud's fugue from occidental civilization was driven by a desire to (re)-discover basic material truths that govern the existence of every ephemeral being which has ever existed in an attempt to understand themselves more fully. This effort to peel back the thick layers of Western abstractions that often distort the modern subject's perception of reality led them on transformative journeys in which they would come into contact with autochthonous Mexican civilizations. Removed from simplistic and sometimes overtly erroneous anthropocentric thought systems designed to delineate the relationship between humankind and the remainder of the universe, both writers would develop a more ecocentric *Weltanschauung* that corresponds to a rudimentary comprehension of the cosmos and the organic cycles that created and which sustain all life on this planet. However, whereas Le Clézio's later fiction seems to suggest that he found the intellectual equilibrium and the profound ontological meaning for which he had been longing, Artaud appears to have plunged ever more deeply into despair in his tragic final years. Although their initiation into shamanic rituals and the cosmogonic symbolism that they entail would indeed facilitate a greater understanding of fundamental material truths for both authors, only Le Clézio's 'Mexican dream' would ultimately culminate in serenity.

Notes and References

1 See chapter two from Keith Moser's *Privileged Moments in the Novels and Short Stories of J.M.G. Le Clézio: His Contemporary Development of a Traditional French Literary Device*. New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2008.

2 It should be noted that the French government relocated Le Clézio to Mexico given his denunciation of crimes against humanity related to prostitution and human trafficking. As De Cortanze notes, "Envoyé en coopération à Bangkok, J.M.G. Le Clézio en fut expulsé après qu'il eut dénoncé la prostitution enfantine de se développer en Thaïlande"(38).

3 See the chapter of *Le Rêve Mexicain* entitled "Antonin Artaud ou le rêve mexicain."

4 All direct quotations from Artaud himself are taken from the collection of essays, letters, and notes entitled *Les Tarahumaras* published by Gallimard in 1971 unless otherwise noted.

5 This is the focus of Le Clézio's seminal essay *L'Extase Matérielle*.

6 For a comprehensive discussion of modern scientific concepts such as Commoner's first law of ecology, the first of law of thermodynamics, and quantum contextualism in the context of Le Clézio's fiction, see chapter four from Keith Moser's monograph *J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Concerned Citizen of the Global Village* (Lexington Books, 2012).

7 It should be noted that the concept of "petitesse" permeates Le Clézio's early essay *L'Extase Matérielle*.

8 The importance of shamanism for both authors will be systematically explored in a later section of this essay.

9 The concept of cosmic humility is also clearly evident in *L'Extase Matérielle* in which Le Clézio asserts, "Alors, il faut s'humilier […] il faut se faire tout petit devant ce qui existe" (69).

10 This term is used in the same sense as Albert Camus employs it in the essays that comprise the collection *Noces*. For a brief, intertextual discussion of the pantheistic euphoria in the essays of Le Clézio and Camus, see Moser, Keith. "Rending Moments of Material Ecstasy in the Meditative Essays of Two Nobel Laureates: Le Clézio and Camus." *Romance Notes* 49 (1): 13-21.

11 Clarifying that Amerindian conceptions of divinity do not imply that the planet is any sort of utopia or 'heaven on earth,' Le Clézio asserts, "Pour les anciens Mexicains, il n'y avait pas de séparation entre les hommes et les dieux. Le monde terrestre, avec toutes ses imperfections et toutes ses injustices, avec sa splendeur et ses passions, était l'image momentanée de l'éternité" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 112).

12 See the postscript from Moser's *J.M.G. Le Clézio: A Concerned Citizen of the Global Village*. New York: Lexington Books, 2012.

13 It should be noted that the autobiographical, indigenous character is named "Colombie" in"Le génie datura" and "Colombia" in *La Fête chantée*. Despite this minor linguistic variation, Le Clézio underscores the importance of the same shamanic experiences in both texts.

14 Le Clézio also highlights the significance of the powerful hallucinogen 'datura' or 'Iwa' in the shamanic rites that he witnessed in indigenous Panama. However, the writer insists that drug usage is not gratuitous in traditional Amerindian societies and it is merely one tool that an experienced shaman utilizes to initiate a type of spiritual (re)-awakening. As the author explains, "Les drogues font partie des techniques du chamane, soit pour les cérémonies de curation, soit pour les rites guerriers" (*Le Rêve Mexicain* 188-189). For this reason, this essay focuses on the philosophical and spiritual role that shamanism itself fills in many autochthonous communities.

15 Indeed, Le Clézio's philosophical quest, which would start to bear fruit after his sustained living experiences with divergent Amerindian civilizations, had already begun in the 1960's.

16 For instance, Artaud confides to his friend Henri Parisot, "j'ai eu l'imbécillité de dire que je m'étais converti à Jésus-christ […] C'est vous dire que ce n'est pas Jésus-christ que je suis allé chercher chez les Tarahumaras mais moi-même" (58-59). Furthermore, the chapter of *Les Tarahumaras* entitled "Supplement au voyage" in which Artaud articulates bizarre concepts such as "Ciguri-Jésus-christ" is more indicative of delirium rather than a reflection of a cohesive worldview (102).

17 Kimberly Jannarone presents a compelling argument in her recent monograph *Artaud and His Doubles* that the angst-ridden writer never seemed to find any real happiness or relief from his ontological trauma. This essential nuance will be briefly addressed at the end of the essay.

18 Other non-Western cultures, such as Balinese society, with similar ecocentric worldviews were also part of Artaud's metaphysical "exploration des forces occultes de l'univers-dont

l'homme serait le réceptacle microcosmique-forces […] constitutives de ce qu'il appellera 'la Cruauté'" (Dureau 89). Affirming that the theater of cruelty is a reflection of this all-encompassing artistic and philosophical project or "sanglante cosmogénèse," Dureau asserts, "dans *Le Théâtre et son double*, il imagine la représentation théâtrale comme une manière de renouer avec le Chaos des origines, dans le désordre duquel il s'évertue à vouloir conquérir un ordre" (93; 94)

[19] In works such as *Ourania* and *Raga*, it is evident that Le Clézio realizes that cultural *métissage* or hybridity has always been unavoidable. Moreover, similar to Glissant, the Nobel Laureate valorizes the cultural exchanges that are emblematic of *la créolité*. In *Les Tarahumaras*, Artaud adamantly insists that Tarahumara culture has not been 'contaminated' by occidental influences.

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Between Two Worlds: Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan

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Caught in the crosscurrents of two cultures- the Indian and the Western- Attipat Krishnaswamy Ramanujan,an American citizen with a deeply rooted Tamil sensibility is able to write of exile feelings in an idiom morphed by nativised sensibility and a homebound vision. Ramanujan born in Mysore in 1929,is a trilingual writer who shows his mastery equally in English, Tamil, and Kannad. While English is the language of his creative works, Tamil and Kannad are the media of translation. He has left behind an illustrious legacy of his poetry with which he will always live as 'a poet of India' and more importantly simply a poet. Though he has been living in the United States long since, he has not forsaken his Indian heritage and sensibility. He was a poet, short story writer, translator, linguist and folklorist–all rolled into one.

Ramanujan, who lived in India and finally settled and died in the USA makes his poetry vibrant with the images of city. Madurai and Chicago serve as the repository of his images, which not only render to his poetry a tensional quality but also reflect upon the pangs of being a poet, constantly haunted by the forces of the two worlds- one alien, the other native. Ramanujan's poetry intends to celebrate the vastness of life by considering the city and its associated images as the manifestation of body. His life is caught in the crossfire between the elemental pulls of his native culture and the aggressive compulsions of the Chicago milieu. One side, the metaphor of the family with its ineluctable inner filiations, and on the other, the self-forged prison of linguistic sophistication.

Living in the ambience of alien culture, Ramanujan has been constantly haunted by the memories of his experiences. This is one of the ways of overcoming the burdens of the life lived in Chicago. It is also one way of legitimizing his identity to escape from the burdens of identity crisis in Chicago. In his *Collected Poems,* Ramanujan expresses life style in the city as mechanical, exilic and no freedom at all. The sophisticated shallow urban life that is at once mechanical and parasitical is enveloped by pretensions and fabrications. Nostalgia, family relationships are central to Ramanujan's poetry. Ramanujan's reflections centre round a cousin, a mother, a father, a wife, an in-law, a brother, a joint family etc. Indeed Ramanujan appears to write about these with a poignant feeling, which only an expatriate cherishes in an alien country.The childhood, the past and the familial relationships peculiar to the Indian society provide the foundation for his poetry.

A remarkable absence of sentimentality usually makes Ramanujan's poetry distinctive .The strategy employed to desentimentalise the recurrent evocations of Indian milieu could be seen mainly in the non-human imagery of his poetry .His preoccupation with his Tamil past ,Tamil roots, both linguistic and cultural, defines his regional identity. He clings to "a tradition very much of this sub-continent. The deposits of which are in Kannada and Tamil and which have been assimilated into English". (Mohanty, *Indian Literature* Vol.237,No.4 Jul-Aug 1994)

Spending the entire life time in the USA and marrying a Syrian Christian, Ramanujan could relate himself to his own familial cultural past in the Southern India. Ramanujan knew it well that this was the only way to retain his identity in the exilic Western world. He could repose a lost past in a language which is not his own. He could do it with success because he drew his strength and sap from the Tamil linguistic tradition.

Ramanujan admitted that English and his professional disciplines like linguistics and anthropology gave him his 'outer forms' and his preoccupation with Kannad and Tamil, the classics and folklores gave him his 'substance', his "inner forms, images and symbols". Ramanujan's poetry embodies a deep sense of Hindu heritage, partly by harping on his familial South Indian experiences and partly by his sincere attempt to nativise English in terms of bringing in closer to the classical Tamil and Kannada literature.

As a 'son of the house' or even as an impassioned home-bound pilgrim, Ramanujan never fails to repossess the memories of his father , mother, uncles, aunt, cousins, relations. He recollects them with such minuteness of details in terms of their dress, behavior, attitudes, that one is often tempted to consider him as a poet of family and roots. His poetry reflects a characteristic pattern of beginning with an event or observation in a family, relating it to the context of Hindu life in tradition and elevating it to a metaphor or symbol, which in fact, embodies the quest for his personal identity. He tries to build up an inscape of his own self, preserving at the bottom the usable memories of his own family.This settles down the scores of Ramanujan's tension as an expatriate poet. In poems like' Obituary', 'Elements of Composition,' 'Snakes',' Still another for mother', 'Love poem for wife', 'History', 'Ecology', Lines to a Granny', 'Love poem for a wife and her trees,' Real Estate 'Ramanujan re-lives his familiar experiences partly to do away with the fear of being faceless and partly to reclaim his past.

The Striders, the first book of poetry by Ramanujan that came out in 1966 contains such beautiful poems as The Striders, 'Snakes', 'Bread and Fish',' A River' and 'An image for Politics'. This recommended volume immediately establishes Ramanujan as a poet of striking imagery and perfect language with an eye for the specific physiognomy of an object or situation,as the noted Indo-English poet R.Parthasarathy puts it evidently "Ramanujan is a poet of concrete details and excels in craftsmanship."

The poem 'Still another for Mother' mixes memory and desire, the past and the present. It begins with a consideration of" that woman/beside the wreckage van/on Hyde park street"(*Collected Poems,* 1995, p.15), who does not allow him 'rest' and who

looks like 'some friends' 'mother' and ends with the memory of the poet's mother and her black- pillared, nineteenth century silent house:

. . . something opened
In the past and I heard something shut
In the future, quietly,Like the heavy door
Of my mother's black –pillared –Nineteenth century
Silent house, given on her marriage day
To my father, for a dowry. [p.16]

"Looking for a cousin on a swing", tells about the peculiar sensation felt by a premature girl of four or five and little older boy of six or seven while they were on a village swing. After this sensation, they climbed a small and leafy tree and did the rest in utter innocence. Very wittily, the poet informs us that the same girl now having grown into a full-blooded mature woman lives in a city and goes in hunting for companions of her passion:

Now she looks for the swing in cities
With fifteen suburbs and tries to be
Innocent about it.

(The *Collected Poems*. p.19) Ramanujan is striking when he portrays the typically Hindu conventions or consciousness. The poem ' A Hindu to his body' demonstrates that the body is important to a Hindu as the soul :

Dear pursuing presence,
Dear body:
You brought me
Curled in womb and memory
... ...
You brought me: do not leave me behind.
(The *Collected Poems,* p.40)

For a Hindu, the body is a source of dharma. A sense of wonder in looking at and into things and situations of living mark the making of Ramanujan's sensibility and vision. It compels him to come to terms with his own self. In 'Self-portrait' Ramanujan makes it quite explicit that his insightful depiction can take him from the foliage to the roots. This poem gives not only a self-portrait but it also shows the use of another interesting theme in his poetry: self-analysis. No doubt, the impression one gathers is that of an uncertain self. It is characteristic of the modern man to subject himself to self-scrutiny and self-search.The mirror presents a picture, which is that of another. This duality of reality is reflected in this poem. In other words, the mirror not only helps to reveal his external, physical appearance but it also penetrates to his inner self, the self of self-recognition.

Another recurrent theme in his poetry is his awareness of the contrasted cultural patterns in East and West. Since he remained rooted in his native culture, he looked at the West with the eye of a South Indian Brahmin, nurtured in his traditional customs and values. The objectivity, which Ramanujan achieves in poetry, is the product of his

long stay in Chicago and of his insightful awareness of his native culture. Chicago could physically alienate him from south Indian environment and because of this distancing it could create an awareness in him to look into his long lost Indian experiences with a certain coolness and objectivity. Thus, even when he falls back on familial past, the poet's tone remains unsentimental. He looks at the past as one does at an album of photographs after long years. Once one learns to look into the self objectively, whatever that self recreates becomes an objective artifact. Therefore, in the case of Ramanujan, there is no either or situation. Whatever he is today, or whatever is his achievement it is because of the interaction, absorption and synthesis of two cultures i.e. the East and the West and integration of two forms or substances, 'the inner and outer'. Chirantan Kulshrestha observes:

> In Ramanujan's poetry passivity becomes an essential precondition for suggesting the inexhaustible potential of the self: it is a positive state of being which allows the self the necessary freedom and transparences to manipulate subjective and linear time, use personae, bring the equations into a vivid focus by interacting memory and time and even observe itself as an object. (Mohanty : 1993, pp 167 - 180)

There is no doubt in the fact that Ramanujan's vision was constantly growing encompassing into its fold diverse exponential realities encountered in the East or in the West. It is true that in the bulk of Ramanujan's poetry, the number of poems involving his Indian experience out weighs that of the poems involving his American life. Viewed from an Indian perspective, Ramanujan's poetry is found to be critical. He is not very much happy about the urban settlement in Chicago. Yet, Chicago could give him some memorable incidents- a life worth living.

In Ramanujan's 'Love poem for wife I' the description of Chicago becomes very much casual:

Only two weeks ago, in Chicago ,
You and brother James started
One of your old drag-out fights
About where the bathroom was
In the backyard.
North or south of the well
next to the jackfruit tree
in your father's father's house in Apleppy. (p.66)

In 'One more after reading Homer', Ramanujan images forth debilitating violence and danger that go hand in hand in the urban America and more so in Chicago. Such dehumanizing and stupefying elements dangle in the air, leaving room for calamities of indefinable proportion to rush in. In this poem Ramanujan depicts:

Neither Paris not Cassandra but only in curious
Cat I come upon a half-burned shoulder blade
Greening in a lake of dead alewives. I wonder
If in Chicago too love in difference and hate is
Some devious way relate at all to deaths by fire. (p.66)

In " Take care" Ramanujan's warnings about the life that is lived in Chicago bespeak his moral judgement and Indian ethics. The tone of voice throughout the poem remains tentative and casual and perhaps this is the surest and most subtle way of handling irony- Ramanujan's forte.

The poet unfurls a carpet of imagery that he depicts - helplessness and insecurity of an individual in the city. The poet gets concluded with the image of hectic life in Chicago.

In Chicago do not walk slow
Find no time to stand and stare
down there, blocks look black.
And white, they look blacker. (p106)

Actually Ramanujan's poetry throws no hints on his preferences either for the Oriental or the Occidental tradition or culture. It only projects the poet's preferences for a wider, global and humanistic culture based on scientific perception and direct approach to reality. Since no exclusively oriental or religious clues seem to help the poet break through the confining barriers between various values, the poet comes to realize that empirical and intellectual insight are the only means to the redemption of human predicament in a new universal culture based on his perception of human unity.

The poet is looking for a cultural milieu of universally reconciling and integrating values for a meaningful and rewarding human existence. If at all he is in search of roots, as his works suggest, it is the search for the roots of the human self. Ramanujan is a good example of how a background of native culture and ethnic roots enables a creative artist to write well on an alien soil. He is able to survive the fate of an exile, because he has never given up his native roots.

Whatever be his minor limitations, Ramanujan is an Indo- Anglian poet of remarkable authenticity and individuality. It is difficult and pointless to trace the impact of a particular poet in Ramanujan. He is a poet of considerable achievement, is a very attentive student of the art and craft of poetry. Very few poets in the Indo-Anglian milieu today equal him.No other poet has shown the ability to organize his experience into language as competently and as uniquely as Ramanujan. Ramanujan's best work has the quality of a quiet strength arising form deep emotions held under artistic restraint and an acute awareness of the abiding values of Indian culture, Hindu religion and Indian life in general. Indian civilization encompasses great variety and complexity are reflected in Ramanujan's English poetry through a refined sensibility. His verse can be interpreted as poetry of reverse romanticism, because the poet is working in the background of multi-folded alienations, having been deeply entangled in different cultural and ethnic roots. This much can be said emphatically that Ramanujan, despite being in possession of a modern sensibility, a modern outlook and attitude to life, remains rooted to his culture.

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REVIEW ESSAY

Philosohpy of Bhagabata Religion in Medieval Orissa.

Ananta Ch. Sukla, *Sridhara Svami: A Medieval Philosopher of Religion,* New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi: : 2010.

The spirit of assimilation and syncretism are the benchmark of Indian cultural tradition. This sprit has always empowered the culture to face the onslaught of dissidence from within as well as from outside; and to keep the tradition alive and healthy. Unfortunately the academic scholars in the post-colonial phase have assessed this grand tradition through the standard set by the Western intellectual norm. Their deep-rooted faith in the supremacy of their own intellectual scheme has never allowed the Western mind to understand that there could be system of thoughts in which reason and intuition, theory and practice, scientism and spiritualism could go hand in hand. But it is unpardonable that our own breed of scholars too have followed the West assiduously. This is one of the reasons why there is dearth of serious materials on the medieval philosophical literature. Our academicians have failed to take a note of the fact that in Indian tradition there can be hardly a religious system that is not rooted in some or other philosophical presupposition; they have often failed to realize that our conception of God is not necessarily a theologically loaded one. So it comes as a great relief that Professor A.C. Sukla has ventured to explore this misplaced myth and has undertaken the challenging task of unfolding the philosophical contributions of Sridhara Svami, the great scholar of the Vaisnava tradition. The book is an eye-opener for those who still smart under the feeling that philosophy and religion cannot go hand in hand. The author also very successfully challenges the other well-entrenched myth, i.e. the Indian philosophical activities came to a grinding halt after 10thto 11th C.E, whereas in fact some of the great philosophical minds flourished during the medieval period. Professor Sukla's detailed analysis of Sridhara Svami's philosophical position amply justifies the point.

Sridhara Svami, the great acarya of the medieval period offered his distinctive interpretation of the philosophy of the Vaisnavism mostly through his commentaries on three basic treatises of the Bhagavata cult, viz, *Bhagavata Purana (Bhavartha Dipika), Visnu Purana (Atma Prakasa)* and *Bhagavadgita (Subodhini)*. In fact, he is the first thinker to offer a detailed commentary on the *Bhagavata Purana.* What makes Sridhara's contribution to Vaisnavism path-breaking is the wonderful syncretism of the apparently different systems like, Saivism and Vaisnavism, Sankhya-Yoga and Advaita. This assimilative mind-set could be attributed to his in-depth study of the *Sastras* and *Puranas* of different genre as well as his Advaitic background. His philosophical stand reflected a rare kind of synthesis that defied strict bounds of the classified systems of thought. The demarcating line between *astika* and *nastika* tradition, between non-dualism and dualism, between the sectarian divisions like Vaisnavism and Saivism gets dissipated and replaced by a healthy spirit of assimilation.

The contents of the book can be broadly divided into two parts. The first two chapters provide the setting that prepares the reader for the proper appreciation of Sridhara's philosophical position. The work opens with a discussion on the life and times of Sridhara Svami. Unlike the West our tradition has paid more attention to the treatises rather than the person. So there is always a scope for debate about the biographical backdrop of the great minds of the Indian tradition. In most cases a scholar encounters the problem of fixing the backdrop without which a proper assessment of philosophical position cannot be properly analysed. The author therefore takes the help of some classics, historical records, and the relevant texts materials to locate Sridhara Svami in the historical space. He holds that this great scholar hailed from Orissa and flourished sometime during the later part of 14th C.E. What makes his claim more authentic is the fact that Orissa during the medieval period had transformed itself into a cradle of unparalleled type of religious syncretism where there existed a happy amalgamation of such divergent sects like Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism and also Buddhism. This perhaps provides a right background for Sridhara Svami to pay his obeisance to both Siva and Visnu in the same passage. This also explains that despite being the head of the Govardhana pitha founded by Sankaracarya that is well-known for its Saiva and Advaitic affiliation Sridhara could write commentaries on the Vaisnavic texts that draws heavily on the Sankhya ontology.

The second chapter entitled "Bhagavata Cult in the Making" is similarly exhaustive in its presentation. In India no intellectual tradition is linear in nature. All the traditions including the so-called religious traditions have grown with a spirit of assimilation. In no religious tradition this is more clearly pronounced than in the evolution and development of Vaisnavism. The cult clearly points to a curious mixture of the Vedic and non-Vedic elements. The shape of the Vaisnavism in the present form has passed through many vicissitudes. In this chapter the author provides a graphic account of how the Visnu -Narayana of the Vedas amalgamates with the non-Vedic idea of Krsna-Vasudeva of the Satvata clan, to finally culminate in the form of systematic image worship. The author Sukla takes care to throw sufficient light on the historical and political aspects of this transformation. The chapter also delineates in detail the role of the Tamil alvars that in more than one respect offers the foundation to the Vaisnavic conception of bhakti. The later Vedantic Vaisnavism of Acarya Ramanuja, Madhva and others, centres largely on the Alvar's depiction of Krsna-bhakti. The evolution of Vaisnavism, right from the Pancaratra texts to the Gaudiya School, is as such very complex. A scholar is likely to be at loss while tracing the exact pattern of the development of this most popular cult. But in this work the exposition is so lucid that there is no unanswered doubt left for a serious scholar. The author makes a pointed though brief discussion on the issue all along making the facts clear with the help of the relevant texts.

The second part of the book deals primarily with the central theme of the book, viz. the ontological, epistemological and eschtatological dimensions of Sridhara's philosophy. The task is not so simple, for, there are lots of conceptual tangles to be untangled which the author does quite admirably. Professor Sukla does not hesitate to delve deep into the theories and concepts that comes in the way of explication of Sridhara Svami's views on ontology, epistemology and eschatology.

Examining the ontological structure of the Vaisnava theory is perhaps the hardest task a scholar is likely to face. Since *Bhagavata Purana* and *Visnu Purana* are not primarily works on philosophy; one has to make an extra effort to systemize the ideas from the scattered contents. Moreover, there is also the need for putting in place a plethora of anomalies one comes across while analysing the philosophical position of the Bhagavata texts. As far as the Vaisnavic ontology is concerned, the first and foremost anomaly one might face is, regarding the exact nature of the Puranic conception of the Highest Reality. Definitely the *Puranas*, especially the works of Vaisnavic genre hold on to a theistic position which allows no distinction between the Absolute metaphysical principle and the religious principle called God. It seems that such texts largely rely on the Sankhya ontology that paradoxically, in its initial stage of development was atheistic. But in later stages though it admitted of God its dualistic tenor continued dominate the metaphysical scheme. So it is not surprising that Vaisnaivic texts like *Bhagavata Purana* and *Visnu Purana* adopt an ontology that accommodates Sankhya dualism within the framework of Upanisadic Monism. Without such assimilation their conception of God would have lost its force. So we notice that *Bhagavata Purana* makes an attempt to adopt the Yoga philosophical position offered by its founder Patanjali. An attempt is made to put Patanjali's theory of *Isvara* as the ultimate metaphysical principle in the Advaitic mould of the *Brahman*. These *Puranas* brought about certain coherence in their metaphysics also by identifying Sankhya conception of the *Purusa* with that of the Vedic concept of *Purusa* as enunciated in the *Purusa Sukta*, (who is also Visnu/ Narayana/Vasudeva, the pure existence) of the *Rg Veda*. But their basic weakness comes to the fore as far as their explication of the relation between the Highest Reality and the phenomenal world is concerned. The Sankhya cosmology is structured around the thesis that the world is constituted of two basic elements - *purusa* (the individual soul), *prakrti* (that manifests itself as the material world) and *kala* (the time that makes this manifestation possible).But it could not offer a satisfactory explanation as to how the unmanifested *prakrti* is transformed into the material world. Complicating the issue further some of the major *Puranas* bring in the notion of an independent principle called *kala* or time. According to them it is the *kala* or time which initiates the creation and dissolution of the phenomenal world. However, the ontological independence of *kala* creates a logical crisis that was later on removed to some extent by *Kurma Purana* and further by Vijnanaviksu's commentaries. These texts reinterpret *kala* just as a condition (*upadhi*) of the Ultimate Reality. Thus the Advaitic and Upanisadic conception of *Brahman* as the one and Unique metaphysical reality is enforced in the Vaisnavic texts like *Bhagavata Purana*.

The other conceptual incongruity that affects the Puranic metaphysics is the identification of the Vedantic notion of *maya* with the Sankhya concept of *prakrti*. Both the concepts have different implications. The third problem one is likely to encounter in the Puranaic metaphysics is the conception *Isvara*. It is metamorphosed to a fictional character with the verbal description of its forms and activities. Thus the impersonal *Isvara* of Patanjali is more or less presented as a personalized God. Not only this, *Isvara* as the God is put within the spatio-temporal framework, (for example, Vaikuntha in case of Visnu and Kailasa in case of Siva), and thereby subject to temporality too. This is not just the end of the matter. The Reality is also subjected to gender politics. Most often it is conceived as a male having a consort acting as its *sakti*. Moreover, this *sakti* is perceived as subservient to the male reality, viz. Visnu/Siva.

Sridhara Svami steers clear of such Puranic anomalies by treating the mythical character of Krsna as a metaphysical principle. Following the *Bhagavadgita* and *Gopalatapini Upanisad* he holds that Krsna is a name *(akhya*) of the Absolute Reality. The name serves as the basis of both – the phenomenal Reality as well as the Absolute Reality. It becomes evident from Sridhara's commentaries that he does not pay much attention either to historical or empirical accounts provided in the major Vaisnava *Puranas*. But it becomes obvious to Sridhara Svami or for that any thinker with a philosophical bent of mind that there are still more logical and conceptual cobwebs to be cleared before one could offer a consistent metaphysical account of the Vaisnavic ontology.

Once the ontological status of Vaisnavaism is structured on non-dualistic ideology three basic questions may crop up –(a) what is the relation between the non-dual Reality and the phenomenal world that is characterized by diversities and temporality? (b) Is the transformation of the One and unchangeable to changeable and diversified phenomenal world a matter of illusion or is it metaphorical? (c) What is the relationship between the *Brahman*, that is of the nature of pure consciousness and the individual soul that too is characterized by consciousness? Following the interpretation provided in the *Bhagavata Purana* and *Bhagavdgita* Sridhara Svami admits that Krisna alone is the non-dual ultimate Reality with two forms of attributes – the essential or inherent (*svarupa*) and accessory (*tatastha*). The qualities like eternal truth, all-pervasive consciousness and unending beatitude are the essential aspects of this reality, at the same time the creation, existence and dissolution of the ever-changing phenomenal world are its accidental qualities. Sridhara would rather take sides with Madhva in placing the inherent as well as the accidental qualities on par, unlike Sankara who treats the *tatastha* qualities as of the nature of illusion. Thus the Reality is not only transcendental but also immanent. The God as the transcendental reality is beyond all the *gunas* or characteristics that control the phenomenal world (*nirguna*), yet it is not just an abstract and arid metaphysical concept. The phenomenal world is the manifestation of the Absolute reality; for, He is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. Therefore, the phenomenal world cannot be cast aside as a mere illusion as conceived by the Advaitins . Here Sridhara brings in, following *Bhagavata Purana*, the

analogy of relationship between a lump of clay and different pots made of it to delineate the relationship between the phenomenal world and the Absolute Reality. So the transformation of the absolute reality to the phenomenal world is real for, Isvara/Krsna is the very foundation (*adhisthana*) of everything. It is only the wise who see no distinction between the two.

It is a fact that to some extent Sridhara makes an honest effort to place the ontology preached by the Bhagavata texts to reinforce assimilation between the monistic position of the Upanisads and the cosmological theory of Sankhya. But he was fully aware of the possible objections regarding the conceptual plausibility of the theory. It may very validly be asked - how the conception of a changeless, indeterminate Reality can accommodate the conception of a phenomenal world characterized by change and determination? The Indian philosophical tradition as such has found it difficult to provide a coherent answer to the question. Some schools of thought like Advaita Vedanta do away with the idea of an independent reality called *Isvara*, so it becomes more comfortable for them to explicate multiplicity of the phenomenal world in terms of illusion. For them it is a case of superimposition (*adhyasa*) of the unreal on the real. This is a case of the illusory experience like seeing serpent in the rope. The Vaisnavas, including that of the Vaisnava Vedantins do not have the logical freedom to explain away the reality of the phenomenal world. Though Sridhara in his commentaries holds that the transfer of Reality to the phenomenal world is like a mirage yet finally he admits that the issue has to be explained through a different route. So he takes help of the linguistic theory of secondary and metaphorical use of language to prove the reality of the phenomenal world. It was not only Sridhara Svami but even Sankara had to take recourse to such theories to explain the Upanisadic position of the identity between the individual self and the cosmic self, i.e. *Brahman*. Indian philosophers including the Grammarian philosophers like Bhartrhari realized that human cognition has to be understood in terms of how our language functions. Man being limited in his linguistic potency can think or speak only through direct speech. So metaphors play a role in our understanding as well as our expression of the nature of the Reality. Sridhara Svami was very much acquainted with such theories. So it becomes easier for him to remove the contradictions involved in Vaisnava ontology with the help of the theory of *gauni laksana* or the metaphorical transfer of meaning between the subject and predicate, with dissimilar qualities. For example, when somebody says, "Devadutta is a lion", it does not imply the incongruous fact that a man called 'Devadatta' is a lion. The statement holds meaning because of the presence of lion-like qualities in Davadutta. This is known as '*gauni laksana*' in some philosophical tradition. Sridhara moves one step ahead and says the use of such metaphorical meaning is not only confined to statements but also to understanding of such metaphysical questions as 'How does the unchangeable Absolute Reality manifest itself as the changeable phenomenal world"? It is a case of metaphorical cognition in which case we connect two dissimilar qualities on the basis of certain similarity. So the relation between the phenomenal world and the Absolute reality is a case of metaphorical transference. As far as the relation between the individual soul and the highest Reality is concerned Sridhara follows the conceptual

route that lies between the Sankhya and Upanisadic scheme. As far as the relation between the individual soul and Reality is concerned, Sridhara sticks to the view that individual soul is not substantially dissimilar with the nature of the Reality. Both represent the same consciousness substantially. They appear to be distinct because the individual soul is the part (*amsa*) of theReality/ *Isvara/ Brahman* is the whole (*amsi*). Thus the relation that can at best be described as a relation of the part and the whole. But still it may very validly be asked: why should there be two criteria to understand two aspects of the phenomenal reality, viz. the material world and the individual soul? For, the individual itself is conditioned by ego. Reversely, one can ask why can't we say "All this (the phenomenal world) is *Brahman*"? Sridhara here takes the help of the Sankhya conception of *prakrti* to sort out the question. According to him *atman* is self-illuminating and of the nature of pure consciousness. It is the *prakrti* that is responsible not only for the manifestation of the world but also the delimitation of the self by the ego. Though admitting the role of *prakrti* Sridhara did not agree with the Sankhya school of thought in ascribing independence to *prakrti*. According to him *prakriti* operates under the control of the *Isvara*, the Ultimate Reality. *Prakrti*, according to *Bhagavata Purana* (and also Sridhara) is nothing more than the energy or *sakti* of Visnu. Besides, the Vaisnava ontology does not share the Sankhya view of creation as transformation (*parinama*) but as manifestation.

But still the Vaisnavic form of monism advocated by such texts as *Bhagavata Purana* does not seem to be logically coherent. Once we admit the position that the phenomenal world is a case of real manifestation of the Absolute Reality; and it is not just a metaphysical principle but an all-pervading entity, who could be worshipped and adored, we have to explain –Why such an entity manifests itself as the phenomenal world. The Vaisnava texts most often invoke the concept of *'lila*' or the sport of the Almighty/God. In other words the manifestation is the sport of the Lord. But the term *lila* that is often translated as the 'sport', is not a simple concept. The concept of sport needs some conceptual clarification before it could be admitted as a plausible explanation. If it is the sport of Visnu, then one may come up with several questions –Is it played by one person or is it a participatory game? Is it played for some enjoyment? Can the player be detached from his play? Answering such questions seems to push the Bhagavata ontology from one contradiction to another. The Puranic monism would not allow the Vaisnavas to share Sankara's view that the use of the word '*lila*' or sport is a case of analogical expression taken from the ordinary language. So Sridhara without taking resort to the concept of sport tells in a straight-forward manner that Visnu alone is the all-pervading Reality. Such doubts come up because we discriminate the one and unique Reality from its manifestation in the form of the created world. It seems that Sridhara was very much aware of unending logical complications in case of the Vaisnava ontology. Finally exasperated with the logical and metaphysical arguments he recommends that the absolute surrender to the Almighty and His divine grace can alone help the mankind to escape from the suffering; and enjoy the ecstasy of the divine truth. Here one may note the *bhakta* in Sridhara wins over Sridhara as a dialectician.

The third chapter dealing with the Vaisnava ontology, in more than one sense, can be said to be the central point of the entire discussion on the religious philosophy of Sridhara Svami. It is very difficult for a lay reader, even trained in philosophy to understand the complex inter-relation between the varied metaphysical theories upheld by such prominent schools of thought like Sankhya, Mimamsa or Vedanta. Without a clear knowledge of the development of such theories one is likely to miss the essence of Sridhara's position as far as his interpretation of the Bhagavata texts are concerned. The author seems to be very much aware of the problem. So he makes a valiant attempt to go to the root of every metaphysical theory that is even remotely connected with his avowed task. Such complex and technical theories like the theory of time, the theory of linguistic meaning (especially, metaphorical meaning), the theory of aesthetic relish (*rasa*) are discussed in a remarkably lucid yet synoptic way so that the reader can judge the ontological structure of the Bhagavata philosophy as enunciated by Sridhara Svami. The Puranic literature as such is not very systematic in their presentation of the ontology they want to propagate. There are contradictions as well as logical gaps in this genre of literature. It is not very difficult to understand the why this is so. Such literature is based on religious sentiments rather than the logical analysis. Yet one cannot say that the Puranic literature of India was purely a series of religious outbursts. There are passages that deal with the metaphysical basis of religious belief. So a scholar of Puranic literature faces the enormous task of inter-relating philosophy and religion. Sridhara Svami as a commentator on three basic texts of the Vaisnavic literature encounters this onerous task. But still his writings need a lot of conceptual clarification which is quite admirably undertaken by the author.

In Indian philosophical tradition metaphysics and epistemology are considered to be two sides of the same coin. So it is quite apt for the author to devote one complete chapter to the Bhagavata epistemology. We have noted that Sridhara dabbles in complicated ontological issues to clarify the position of the Vaisnava theology. It is, therefore, expected that Sridhara should justify his ontological presupposition with a relevant epistemological theory. As a follower of Bhagavata school of thought he seems to be in a very tight spot. He does not have logical freedom like Sankara to dismiss the determinate nature of the Reality. There is a sort of compulsion on his part to admit that highest Reality/*Isvara*/ Visnu is not only a transcendental indeterminate principle but is also as personal God having name and form (Of course, Sridhara takes care to show that the determinations like names and forms applied to such a God cannot be compared to the ordinary names and forms). So Sridhara's or for that matter any Bhagavata philosopher's problem is compounded when he has to explain –How do we know such a God? However, Bhagavata school could always take some clue form the elaborate scheme formulated by the Indian philosophical tradition. It has been admitted that there could be various means of knowledge, like, perception, inference, analogical knowledge and verbal authority. But the Advaitins like Sankara always make it clear that the knowledge of the highest Reality is not achievable by such ordinary means of knowledge. It could be achieved only by direct apprehension/experience (*aparoksanubhuti*) of the Reality, that defies all the determinations and categories of speech and thought.

The Reality is realizable but not expressible. Though Sridhara supports a non-dualistic point of view he is in no position to admit that Reality is indeterminate or *nirvikalpa* in the footsteps of Sankara. For him God is a person who could even have birth, could have a particular form, who could engage himself in the activities of the world. So the question crops up-how do we know such a God? Sridhara would say we know such a Reality through our unflinching faith in His divine presence and grace. He can only be experienced through heart. Thus there is a definite shift from the intellect/intuition to heart. The individual soul pines for his grace and finally achieves an experience that can be *relished.* The realization is not only *aparoksanubhuti* but also *rasanubhuti*. Here Bharata's theory of *rasa* that was primarily intended to be applied to the dramatic or aesthetic experience is now introduced in case of God-realization. Bharata or for that matter the later *rasa* theorists categorized such relishable (*rasa*) experience to eight/ nine categories like *srngara* (erotic love), *karuna* (pathetic) etc. They refer to the emotional states that work of art could evoke. However, *bhakti* is never accepted as an independent *rasa*. The Bhagavata ideology elevates *bhakti* to a form of highest relishabale experience. So the Vaisnava philosophers add to the scheme of *pramanas* (methods or means of knowledge) a new category. *Bhakti* is not seen just as a path of God-realization but as an epistemological principle too. It is a form of knowledge that is direct and intuitive. But this is not the knowledge (*jnana* or *prama*) in the general sense of the term. *Bhakti* now comes to mean the ecstatic feeling that is associated with experiencing the *saguna* reality (a personalized God) or the Reality in a manifested form as Krsna. The distinctive feature of this new scheme of epistemology is that the highest knowledge is not only a direct experience, but an experience that is not rooted in human effort alone. God's grace is one of the conditions of such an experience. Unlike the classical Indian philosophical systems Vaisnava theories do not bother about the 'knowledge' in the technical sense of the term. So *bhakti* is presented as a path of the God-experience that is quite distinct from *jnana*. This is no wonder that in the *Bhagavadgita, bhakti* is recommended as an independent path of self-realization. Sridhara highlights on the path of *bhakti* as enunciated in the text. With this he parts way with Sankara who has always held *jnana* as the superior means of self-realization. Even his definition of *bhakti*, 'as a form of investigation in to one's self' (*sva svarpanusandhana*) toes this line of thought. On the other hand, for Sridhara *bhakti* is primary. It is the cause of *jnana*. There is no doubt about the fact that Sridhara, to some extent compromises his position as an advaitin to stick to his allegiance to the Bhagavata ideology of *bhakti* as enunciated in *Bhagavata Purana* and *Visnu Purana*.

The concept of *bhakti* as enunciated in the Vaisnava texts like *Bhagavata Purana* and other works is not altogether a new idea. Long since such an idea was propagated by the alvar saints/ poets. The alvars (etymologically standing for those immersed in the love of God/Krsna) have delineated *bhakti* in terms of passionate love for Krsna. But in case of the Bhagavatas there seems to be some social and moral hitch when the treatises of this genre depicted *bhakti* in terms of a passionate love-play between Krsna and the *gopis* (milk-maids of Vrndavana).The *Bhagavata Purana* depicts in detail the passionate love (amounting to extra-marital love) of the *gopis* for Krsna, as

this is upheld to be the paradigm of *bhakti*. The idea finds its narrative expression in the episodes dealing with the *rasa* (love-play) of Krsna with the *gopis* in both the texts, *Bhagavatapurana* as well as *Visnupurana*. Sridhara as the commentator on these two works of Vaisnava order could not but defend the spirit of the narratives. He has to undertake the task in accordance with the Bhagavata cult that strictly follows the tradition. Both these narratives are to a large extent based on depicting the erotic dimension of love. As a commentator of the three major Vaisnavic treatises Sridhara definitely faces some problems in explicating the notion of *rasa* and the erotic elements associated with it. He at some points provides metaphysical and aesthetic justifications in defence of the presence of erotic element that was vehemently criticized by non-Vaisnavic section of the people. At the same time Sridhara was quite aware of the complications involved. So finally he concludes that we should not interpret such anecdotes as of the nature of erotic relationship as Krisna himself is *atmarama* (self-immersed and self-relishing); so his enjoying anything else than himself is self-contradictory. He writes, "We therefore contend that five chapters narrating *rasa* episode reflect the transcendentality of the whole affair –no body is actually (or physically) enjoying passion anywhere, rather transcending it everywhere. The highest bliss lies in embracing Acyuta (the Lord) in meditation only". As in case of ontology, in this case also we notice that the real *bhakta* and seeker in Sridhra comes to the fore. He interprets *bhakti* as a form of *sadhana* that needs the cultivation of *sattvika* qualities as prescribed in the *Bhagavatgita*, without any reference to emotionalism either literal or metaphorical.

The analytical acumen of the author Sukla is quite evident in this chapter too. He not only offers us a detailed exposition of the philosophical background of the theory of aesthetic relish *(rasa)* but provides a sociological and historical account of the ideas involved in the depiction of *rasa* in the major Vaisnavic Puranas.

In the chapter entitled, "Sridhara and Bhagavata Eschatology" the author tries to offer an exposition of the nature of human liberation and the experience of the ultimate Reality in the Bhagavata literature as such, with special reference to Sridhara's estimation of such an experience. It cannot be denied that Indian tradition itself is more or less obsessed with soteriology, i.e. liberation, famously known as *moksa*, *apavarga*, *mukti*. Every discipline including, philosophy, theology, aesthetics, grammar, astronomy etc., aims at this goal. Of course, there is no unanimity of opinion among different schools of thought on the issue. If Sankhya and Vedanta have described it as a positive state of absolute bliss (*anada*), then Yoga delineates it as a neutral state with no feeling of any sort (*nirvana/ Samadhi*). Again, there are differences among the philosophical schools regarding the question whether such a state of liberation can be achieved during the lifetime (*jivanmukti*) or after the cessation of the physical body (*videhamukti*). According *Bhagavatgita, moksa* is a state of absolute calm and quietitude (*santi*), which could be achieved not by renunciation but by performing all the worldly duties surrendering the results to the Almighty. This text also makes it clear that there is a distinction between the heavenly happiness, on the one hand and absolute peace and bliss, on the other. Those who aim for the heaven engage themselves in the actions prescribed by the

scriptures. But the heavenly happiness is of limited duration, for, after a limited period, the soul comes back to the world by way of rebirth when the fruits of one's action are exhausted. On the other hand he who achieves the *mukti* or bliss overcomes cycle of birth and death. Sridhra largely follows the *Bhagavadgita's* conception of *mukti*. For him liberation is absolute peace without any trace of relativism. But the earlier Vaisnava Vedantins like Madhva introduced a categorization of the stages of *mukti*, viz., *salokya*, *samipya*, *sarupya*, and *sayuja*. The *sayuja mukti* is the ultimate phase in which the individual soul becomes a part of the body of the Almighty Visnu. According to Sridhara this phase of *mukti* can only be attained by the *yogis* through their hard penance. This is not meant for the common man. So he emphasizes that *bhakti* is even superior to *sayuja mukti*. *Bhakti* in its purest form is achieved by divine grace triggered by guru. Liberation for Sridhara is an unworldly extraordinary ecstasy attained not by any dialectical or discursive argument, not by cultivation of rationality or ethical or moral values, but only by unconditional surrender (*saranagati*) to Narayana/Krsna, the ultimate Reality, the non-dual consciousness who is also qualified by his profound love for those creatures who are absolutely dedicated to Him. Thus one of the essential qualities of God is His *bhakta-bhakti*, i.e. His love of those who love Him. So Sridhara does not appeal to the God for *jnana* but *anuraga* (attachment) for singing His glories. Regarding the question whether a *bhakta* attains the *jivanmukti* or *videha mukti* Sridhara's answer may appear somewhat unclear. In certain contexts he announces that God's grace is definitely obtainable in a person's life time, but at certain places he seems to follow the text, *Nrsinghatapini* in claiming that *mukti* is achievable after the cessation of the body. But a close look at his works reveals that the contradiction is apparent as is evident from his interpretation of the term *dehanta* (cessation of the body). Once the *anuraga* or the grace from the God is obtained the soul's association of the body, either in the gross form or subtle form is lost. So *dehanta* in this case does not imply the cessation of the body. Sridhara justifies his position by quoting a stanza from Abhinava Gupta's *Gitartha- Sangraha bhakti* wherein it is stated that, *bhakti* is relished only by a living being. What ultimately matters in *bhakti* is the relishability of the ultimate Reality. We cannot exactly say whether *anuraga* leads to *bhakti* or *bhakti* leads to *anuraga*; for, in case of self-realization the relationship of cause and effect does not hold. Similarly, we cannot exactly pinpoint whether *bhakti* causes *moksa* or *moksa* causes *bhakti*. Sridhara identifies *bhakti* with *moksa* which is nothing other than singing the glories of Hari/Krsna. Thus the highlight of his conception of eschatology is *bhakti* as a *rasa* experience. Now, the question may be raised that if *bhakti* is a *rasa* then it signifies some other form of emotional state (*bhava*). Being an emotional state it is dominated by *maya*. So *mukti* through *bhakti* is likely to be hindered by *maya*. If liberation is freedom from *maya* how liberation be equated with *rasa* experience? Sridhara's answer to such a query is quite straight forward – *rasa* is experienced when *sattva guna* (pure and divine qualities) is predominant. The Bhagavata cult holds the predominance of the *sattva guna* in human life as its sole aim. So the effect of *sattva* domination in the form of *rasa* experience is the source of unadulterated ecstasy (*ananda*) that signifies

different phenomenal forms of Visnu (in such phenomenal forms the *sattva* quality predominates). Thus we note that Sridhara deviates from the Advaitic stand that *moksa* means the absence of all the three *gunas*. From this argument it obviously follows that for Sridhara *moksa* is a direct experience of the *saguna Brahman* in the form of Visnu in His multiple manifestations. Clarifying his position Sridhara says, Brahman might be *nirguna*, hence beyond the linguistic expressibility, but in the case of *bhakta*'s relish of *Brahman* in its *saguna* form there is absolutely no necessity of the discursive knowledge of any linguistic function.

As far as *moksa* or *mukti* is concerned *Bhagavata Purana* even takes a bolder stand. *Bhakti* is now placed in the pivot. *Bhakti* is not only a relishable experience but also the means (*sadhana*) and the end (*sadhya*). Thus *bhakti* is even higher than *moksa/kaivalya/apavarga*, as advocated by different systems of thought. Following this line of thought Sridhara comments that, loving surrender to Visnu is the highest order of human experience, superior even to the highest level of *apavarga*. The love evoked by *bhakti* is the gift of Krsna, the archetypal lover.

Sukla as usual presents a critical as well as analytical approach while discussing Sridhara Svami's notion of the God-realization. He enumerates the real nature of *bhakti* experience by ample number of examples from the *Bhagavata Purana* as well as *Visnu Purana*.

The author concludes the work with an examination of Sridhara Svami's influence on later Vaisnavism. As stated earlier, Vaisnavism cannot be said to be a uniform sectarian religion. Its metaphysics and soteriolgy have passed through many interpretations and reinterpretations. Nevertheless, the way Sridhara correlates the Bhagavata literary corpus, viz. *Bhagavadgita*, *Visnu Purana* and *Bhagavata Purana* is unparalleled in the history of Vaisnavism. The philosophical core of these Bhagavata literatures remained largely unexplored till Sridhara Svami came up with his commentaries on them. So it is natural that Sridhara's works deeply and extensively influenced the later forms of Vaisnavism. A clear stamp of Sridhara Svami's commentaries could be noticed in the works of such great Vaisnava santhas as Sri Caitanya, Sankaradeva, Jagannatha Dasa as well as some Vaisnavas of North India. In this context the author takes up for discussion certain post-Sridhara literary works. Rupa Goswami (of Gaudiya Vaisnavism) for example, treats *bhakti* as a *rasa* (the relishable experience) in his *Ujjalanilamani* and *Bhakti Rasamrtasindhu*. Though the works follow Sridhara's line of thought, the difference in the interpretation of *bhakti* as a *rasa* becomes apparent form the fact that in Sridhara's scheme there is no place for excessive eroticism or schizophrenic frenzy in the practice of *bhakti*. Nor did he approve of the trans-sexualism preached by the alvars. As the author has clearly explicated, despite handling of hard and circuitous metaphysical arguments Sridhara finally took a u-turn and took resort to *bhakti* as unalloyed and unconditional surrender to God and His grace. This is the reason why he did not see a water-tight distinction between *saguna* and *nirguna bhakti*. However, in post-Sridhara phase, there seems to be a dichotomized theories of *bhakti – nirguna bhakti* and *saguna bhakti* championed by Kabir and Tulsidas, respectively. Following Sridhara

the author argues that as far as their philosophical positions are concerned there is not of much difference between these two paths. Both these paths suggest *bhakti* as the ultimate means of God-realization.

The author of this work should be lauded in two respects. First, it is an onerous task to explore the metaphysical and ontological dimensions of any religious work; for, such writers do not systematically expound their definite stand. So the author must be commended for the pain he has undertaken to systematically present Sridhara Svami's philosophy on the basis of his commentaries on the works that primarily belong to the genre of religious literature. Second, the author seems to be constantly aware of the fact that his target readers are not only academic philosophers. So he makes a valiant effort to simplify very technical philosophical concepts like the concepts of *Brahman*, *kala*, *laksana*, *rasa*, *jnana*, etc. This helps the readers sail through the work effortlessly. It is an extremely enjoyable book which would definitely enlighten both academic scholars and lay readers in understanding the philosophical basis of Vaisnavism, in general and Sridhara Svami as a Vaisnava philosopher, in particular. Sahitya Akademi deserves our kudos for publishing such an interesting work.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Simon Goldhill and Edith Hall (Eds.), *Sophocles and the Greek Tragic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 336.

The present volume is dedicated to Professor Pat Easterling as a token of honour for her life-long studies in Greek literature as also for her guidance to a generation of scholars over decades active at Cambridge in exploring new horizons in the Greek literary traditions. Pat's efforts in publishing the *Cambridge History of Classical Literature* and the *Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* remain a source of encouragement and enlightenment for the generations of students, scholars and even common readers of the Greek literary history and criticism.

The thirteen essays collected in the present volume are distributed under four sections: an introduction followed by a section that looks at the relationship between the audience and the actors on stage, each of the three essays presupposing as also delineating Sophocles' understanding of the tragic genre as a democratic behaviour, i.e., Sophocles' idea that tragedy involves at once four factors such as acting, audience, deliberations and judgements all portraying the political character of the genre called "tragedy". The next section focuses upon a single, but the key Sophoclean figure, Oedipus. The fourth section is devoted to theoretical discourses that emerge from the tragic texts themselves constructing the tragic tradition through the three great tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides who concentrated on the state of human life as conditioned by the interplay of divine authority and human inabilities, stretching this tradition also over a long time-scale — to Plutarch and Shakespeare.

In the introductory essay the editors offer an historical account of the Sophoclean scholarship starting with Richard Jebb's commentary on *Antigone*. During this phase of the early twentieth century literary appreciation in general and appreciation of the Greek tragedy in particular were heavily drawn upon the Hegelian model of the German critics who were in search for 'ideal beauty' and 'truth to human nature' the qualities suitable for the Victorian model of social ethics and human character. A number of Greek scholars such as Gilbert Murray, Von Wilamowitz, Karl Reinhardt, H.D.F. Kitto, Pietro Pucci, C.M. Bowra and R.I.P. Winnington-Ingram are discussed with a view to highlighting the growth and construction of a tradition of tragic criticism (adopted by A.C. Bradley in his studies of Shakespearean tragedy). Appearance of New Criticism in the Anglo-American literary culture rejected German idealism, Victorian sentimentalism (of Ruskin and Pater) and historicism of Wilamowitz, and instead, the critical terms that governed the studies of (Greek) dramatic literature were 'form', 'pattern', 'coherence', 'integration', and 'meaning'. The main function of criticism is the interpretation of individual works of art. The overall intention of the editors in compiling this volume is, however, to focus "the degree to which contemporary criticism at the beginning of the twenty-first century relates to the criticism at the beginning of the twentieth century" and to examine if this contemporary criticism can/ should/ will escape the agendas established during the last two centuries.

The editors trace four areas where contemporary Sophoclean criticism develops: political sphere, performance of the plays, tragic (Sophoclean) language and the tradition that picks up on elements in each of the previous three areas. The first one is initially hinted at by the French critic Jean-Pierre Vernant who argues that Greek tragedy emerged at a particular historical point, at a point where there was a clash between a Homeric world of mythic norms and a civic world of legal norms – a key way of viewing the tensions and ambiguities within fifth century democratic ideology – the relationship between divinity and humanity. Human beings act within a democratic norm where they are responsible for their own action, not guided by divine beings. Performance of the tragedies has been an important determinant of the tragic genre that distinguishes it from the visual representation of the tragic actions on pots. The difference between the stage performance and painting of the same action points out tragedy as a distinct genre. Concerning the language of Sophoclean tragedy Vernant's reading of sophisticated linguistic ambivalence and ambiguities has been strongly debated: "How do we bring together the powerful emotions tragedy releases, the lasting images it creates, the political impact it has revealed, with the more evanescent ironies and doubts of its shimming poetry?" (p. 19) Finally, the tradition of Sophoclean criticism has been a tradition of repeated recreation through performances, critical readings and imaginative networkings.

To the second section of the book (Part One) three scholars contribute: Simon Goldhill, Ismene Lada-Richards and Edith Hall. Goldhill suggests "that Sophoclean theatre is an excellent place to think about the audience of democracy…how Sophocles dramatizes the process of being (in) an audience: how does Sophocles put the audience on stage." The audience does not refer to the spectators in the auditorium only, the dialogues uttered by the characters on the stage are also addressed to other actors on the stage: "every speech is addressed to someone who could be said to be its audience; even monologues are spoken before a chorus…" (p. 29) Lada-Richards analyzes Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and explores "performance" not as an outer frame only, but the very inherent structure that makes the play itself: action of the play is structured by acting. Aristotle says, tragedy imitates serious human action, and the present writer says that this action is not or cannot be presented independently of the performance: it is the performance that makes the play, not the verbal text without performance. Edith Hall studies *Trachiniae*, a tragedy about sex and destiny, as also displaying the importance of deliberation that reveals its intimate relationship with the Athenian democracy: The citizen-audience of the play was also the community's executive body. The audience does not simply enjoy the performance, it also participates in or is engaged with the democratic process of decision-making, attending a sort of training in the democratic policies. Hall exemplifies this element through Deianeira's deliberations with the chorus in sending the robe smeared with Nessus' blood to Heracles. The story is not simply narrated. There are enough material in the play to prove how Sophocles was anxious to reveal to his democratic audience the importance of deliberations in avoiding hasty decisions that cause irreparable damage to both personal life of the citizens and

the policies of a democratic government. Hall has successfully countered the arguments of August Schlegel that the play falls short of intellectual profundity of Sophocles and hence it should not be counted among his plays. She asserts that the Sophoclean tragic tradition is constructed within the genre itself and also within the intellectual and artistic environment of the Greek world as a whole.

Peter Burian, Chris Carey, Michael Silk and Fiona Macintosh contribute to the third section (Part II) of the book. Burian and Carey concentrate on two plays of Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. While contemplating on the ending(s) of *OT*: "The tension between ending and continuity in *OT* belongs to a complete interplay of temporal fragments." (p. 116) Past continues to the future through the present, and tragedy mediates between past and present in many ways. Its language mediates between the high styled Homeric past and the contemporary vocabulary of the spectators, between the heroic age and the democratic Athens. Burian reads that the ending of *OT* is inconclusive because, although Oedipus declares that he would go for Cithaeron finally where his parents planned to kill him, there is a sense of ambiguity in his announcement, taking his speech, "But let my fate go wherever it is going" into consideration. In fact all great works of literature end in ambiguity. Burian says, "Ending need not bring closure: it is not necessarily the same thing as resolution. An open ending, one that leaves significant strands of continuity in a state of uncertainty, produces tension between the narrative trajectory and the divergent possibilities opening out beynd it." (p. 116) All temporal arts (should) end in an endless continuity of time itself. Carey discusses the third stasimon of *OC* and the other two contributors attempt at a comparative assessment – Silk highlights semantic diversion in Sophocles, Yeats and Virgil whereas Macintosh studies six reworkings of *OT* in their performance during 1919-1936.

There are five chapters in the fourth section (Part III) titled "Constructing Tragic Traditions", written by Kortas Valakas, Angus Bowie, Richard Buxton, Olive Taplin and Christopher Pelling. Valakas offers theoretical views of the fifth century Athenian tragedy, Bowie presents pictures of Athens and Delphi in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Buxton depicts feminized males in Euripides' *Bacchae* and Taplin deals with the character of Hector in a fourth-century tragedy of the same title by Astydamas (the younger). Pelling, on the other hand, rather quite relevantly, adds an interesting chapter on the continuity of the Greek tragic tradition as he explores in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. He argues that the structural elements such as plot, character and unity as theorized by Aristotle are all manifest in this Roman play of Shakespeare making the play, therefore, more Greek than Roman.

While pointing to a number of cognate terms of mimesis as the key term in explaining the nature of tragedy as the *mimesis* of serious human action (Aristotle) Valakas states: "although we simply cannot know how and where a technical usage of terms about art and theatre was introduced, in the case of the vocabulary of *mimesis* and *eiko(n),* as in other cases of Presocratic theoretical language and themes, Plato and Aristotle seem to have reflected and responded to the terminology used by the fifth-century intellectuals rather than to have invented it." (p. 188) This statement sounds nothing new since the

present reviewer elaborated all these points long ago in 1977 (*The Concept of Imitation in Greek and Indian Aesthetics*). Tragedy (theatre) as the visualization of epic narrative has long since been explained by several critics. Stephen Halliwell has also recently focused much on this point (*The Aesthetics of Mimesis*). Besides, Richard Hunter in his*Critical Moments in Classical Literature* (2009) has analyzed Aristophanes' *Frogs* as the origin of Greek critical evaluation.

What the contributors to the present volume have univocally observed is the correlation of epic mythology with the contemporary historiography of the fifth-century Athenian democracy. By and large this is what Pat Easterling has tried to project all through her critical career that her disciples have followed in the present volume. The Sophoclean tragic tradition institutionalized the tragic genre, both in its verbal and theatrical forms, by transforming the *mythic* 'reality' into the contemporary *historical* 'truth' that contributed to the growth of intellectual awareness in the members of the Athenian democracy. This historical approach might stand as a strong counter to the Platonic dismissal of the epic falsehood, although not stronger than the Aristotelian philosophical counter to Plato. On the whole, however, the insight and efforts of the contributors in their interpretation, re-interpretation and reviews of the Greek tragic tradition continuing from Sophocles till date promote our understanding and rethinking of this outstanding aesthetic contribution of human culture.

Arvydas Sliogeris, *The Thing and Art: Two Essays on the Ontotopy of the Work of Art* (Translated from Lithuanian by Robertas Beinartas), Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009, pp. 153.

This eminent Lithuanian philosopher proposes a new approach to determine the mode of existence of an artwork that opposes the mass of literature developed by a group of the twentieth-century Euro-American scholars who name this mode of existence as "ontology", i.e., search for the ontic entity or the very nature of an artwork. Considered materially, there is no difference between an artwork made by a human being (of physical/material object) and an object of nature, both being physical/natural/material in character. But, then, what exactly is the criterion (or criteria) to distinguish them from one another? This has remained a puzzling issue, in spite of rigorous efforts by the philosophers since Plato onward for settling it. Both Plato and Aristotle use the word *mimesis* (imitation) for both defining and describing an artwork while distinguishing it from a "mere" object of nature (*physis*). This difference is made on the basis of transformation or "transfiguration" (as Arthur Danto holds it) of a physical object. Artwork is a man-made transfiguration of a "mere" natural object. The epithet "man-made" is called by the author of the present book under review – "hominized" as distinguished from "non-hominized" or natural/ mere real things.

That all man-made or hominized things are artworks has been already decided by the classical masters Plato and Aristotle who counted only the imitative-man-made things under what we call "fine arts" (eighteenth century use, see Paul Kristeller's

foundational essay "The Modern System of the Arts", 1951) or recently "artworks" (Arthur Danto). The Greek category *mimetikai technai*, as Aristotle has devised, refers to the man-made transfigurations of the physical objects that represent or/ refer to the physical objects that may not actually exist in nature, but might or might have existed somewhere sometime, i.e., the "probable" existence, not the "possible" as Aristotle's judgment dictated. Therefore Danto's "transfiguration" must be understood not as a mere transfiguration, but a representational one. But, again, this representation is not also an object of verified or verifiably empirical existence. The ghost of Aristotelian "probability" haunts the modern theorists in their formulating the notions on Intentional attributes and fiction to include the avant-garde arts of the twentieth century modernism that superseded the nineteenth century realism.

In an effort for accommodating the avant-garde arts that expand the horizons of "fine arts" Nelson Goodman proposed a dualistic ontology of art – autographic (painting and sculpture) and allographic (literature and music) whereas Gregory Currie, rejecting this dualistic ontology, proposes a common ontology: all artworks are "acts" or performances (of the artist), a proposal that virtually goes back to the Greek theory of *poeisis* or "making". The artist is a "maker" and his art is a "making" in general, and again, this "making" is not just any making or act, it is an "imitative" making or action. Under such circumstances the contemporary debate over the mode of existence of a physical phenomenon whether an object or an act that should be distinguished as art, ends in futility – only beating around the bush.

Arvydas Sliogeris now replaces the term "ontology" altogether, and, instead introduces a new term "ontotopy", that should, he thinks, solve the problem of the mode of existence of artworks. He suggests that we should not search for any "ontology" of artworks, but for their "ontotopy" that distinguishes between the hominized and non-hominized things. The term ontotopy (Gk ontos + topos), as it is coined by the author, means real status of a thing that does not change in its transfiguration – a piece of paper smeared with paints remains unchanged even when it is *interpreted* (or even *enjoyed*) as a picture of a man or an animal. This thing, the painted piece of paper is neither responsible nor bothers for its being enjoyed or interpreted: "If the work of art itself could speak, it would probably tell me this: at least I did not tell this, at least I think I am not liable for arousing, exciting, and stimulating anything. I am, and this much is enough for me; may be someone needs me, may be indeed I arouse catharsis, but all this does not depend on me and I do not give a damn; I am a thing, I simply *am.* First we notice that the work of art is a thing that has being-in-itself. And only afterwards we start with our stories about catharsis, emotions and the like." (pp. 23)

The New Critics rejected the relevance of artist-art relationship in art criticism. But the present author, going a step further, proposes to reject the audience-art relationship as well in his venture to study artwork *in itself*. He calls this approach a *philosophical* one or otherwise an *ontotopical* one as opposed to the aesthetical one that investigates *ontology* of art. Although aesthetical approach is also a philosophical inquiry, the author argues that his approach is somehow philosophical *per se*. Apparently he

distinguishes between a real or phenomenal (or empirical) thing and a metaphysical thing and seeks to investigate this metaphysical thing in artwork: Real things exist, ideal or metaphysical things (i.e., words) subsist, but in both cases man is tied to sensibly predicated reality. Therefore even *thinking away* the horizon of real things, man remains tied to them. The contact of man and thing is a primordial ontotopical given, the ontotopical constant of man as a finite being. "Everything that happens to man in this world, everything that he himself executes, that he does or does not, thinks or does not think, directly or indirectly, is a dialogue with things. And namely things are the only real *Transcendence*… There is no event in general, event-by-itself and in-itself. Every event is an event among things and with things, and everything that happens, happens in the thickness of things." (p. 9)

Precisely the author rejects *aesthetical* approach to art as it is an anthropocentric approach. In his view man himself is also a thing, then why should art be considered in terms of its relation to man, i.e., his reactions and responses to it either emotional or intellectual? He further writes: "The theoretical gaze at the thing brings back to the primordial contact of man and the thing, and in this kind of contact the thing, as a phenomenon of being and a monolith of beyond-human being, is senseless. Consequently, being is senseless not accidentally, but essentially, ontotopically. The thing, as a phenomenon of being, i.e., as an object of theoretical contemplation, is substantial, it is itself substance or is made up of substances. And what is substance? It is primordial, absolutely monolithic, opaque, materially predicated reality out of which all diversity of things of the sensible world originates. It explains everything, all sensible entityhood, but cannot be explained itself, it can be only stated…Human mind can only state its being." (p. 19)

There is nothing controversial so far, nothing to disagree with the author that everything in the world, including human beings are substantial existing spatially. In other words, the ontic-entity of the whole world is a spatial existence or topical – hence everything is onto-topical. Then how to distinguish between a thing that is not considered art, and the other thing considered an artwork? The author states that so far, in considering the ontology of art, critics have viewed it in terms of the audience's attitude without focusing on the very being of the work of art *as a thing* — thus the prevalent search for the reality/ being of the work of art is ontological whereas there should be a search for the being of art without any reference to the subjective attitude, the search being an ontotopical one, or the search for the ontotopy, the spatial form of art. This search is possible theoretically (if not possible practically?). The author founds the classical theory of art as mimesis of nature on the fact that for the Greeks there was no difference between the objective being of the sensible things and their sensible form as presented to the subjective sense – "they were directly interchangeable with the sensible equivalent, they not only were akin to the work of art, but also could be easily transferred to the space of the work of art *senser stricto* and acquire the status of a work of art." (p. 104) Thus the work of art is nature transferred to a different space, though ontotopically nature and art are not only akin to each other but also the same in

substance. Similarly, referring to Rieke's poetry, the author observes that "first of all Rieke saw things, their independent individualized being-in-itself and for itself. The thing is the main hero of Rieke's poetry and philosophy. Not man, but the thing, and man insofar as he is a thing. This does not mean that Rieke diminished man but by comparing people to things, the artist exalts man, for he is a friend, mentor, and poet of things. (p. 47)

It seems clear to note that Sliogeris argues against the Renaissance anthropocentric humanism, which, he thinks, dominates the ontological theories in contemporary aesthetics, and seeks a shelter in Rieke and Cezan for opposing these theories that he thinks are anthropocentric. But, strangely, he misses the vital point that these modernistic artists in their symbolist world view do preach the theory, as against their realist predecessors, that man is *homo symbolicus* – he creates a world of symbols out of the phenomenal world he senses around him.

Symbolism, the very core of modernism is certainly not Renaissance anthropocentrism. But a creative man never senses a thing as it is there in nature. Thus the thing-in-itself, or say a tree-in-itself, is not the same for all the creative men. Modernism is certainly founded on subjectivity, if not on anthropocentrism. It seems Sliogeris's major premises are misguided. By substituting "ontotopy" for "ontology" he hardly achieves any success for solving the problems concerned in contemporary aesthetics.

Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009, pp. 216.

"This book", the author clarifies, "offers a reading of the postcolonial novel that is centred upon an alternative concept of spatial politics: one that is rooted not solely in a politics of the nation, but instead reflects the diverse spaces that construct the postcolonial experience." (p. 1) Harnan experience/ knowledge is determined by two categories, as Immanuel Kant has demonstrated long since, time and space. For Kant and later, for Gotthold Lessing the influential art theorist and critic of Germany, space is a stable concept, determined by time, putting phenomena in a temporal and linear sequence. But the tangibility of space has been questioned since the publication of Michel Foucault's English translation of "Of Other Spaces" in 1986 along with a number of other events in the global environment of critical thought such as the emergence of neo-Marxism leading to a new philosophy of power politics stimulated by Edward Said's *Orientalism* followed by the "sub-altern" movement led by the intellectuals of the colonized cultures. Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism challenged the very concept of tangibility – nowhere nothing is tangible, not only space, whole of the cosmic phenomena undergoes constant dissemination, shifting endlessly and indeterminately. Space as a tangible presence was considered an endless series of representations. The rise of multiculturalism became more a political necessity than a genuine cultural phenomenon – a need for tolerating the unavoidable imposition of the "other" (cultures) rather than a happy welcome and cordial brotherhood. The issue of originality of any

culture in a space-bound geography such as English, Indian and African has been questioned. Colonization has brought a hybrid notion of culture in the postcolonial period. Sara Upstone rejects Homi Bhabha's concept of a "third space", because, following Derrida, if deconstruction is an endless process of disintegration and re-integration, how could space be counted or identified in any homogenous model? If a text or what is written is erased by a new text, then Upstone argues, all texts are "overwritten". The colonizers' claim that they have put an order on the colonized space is simply a myth, as is also the colonizers' "order" a myth. Foucault suggested a specific kind of space: one that encapsulates the postcolonial space of interrogation and multiple interpretations – what he calls "heterotopia", blending the real and unreal (Derrida's absence and presence). But the present author coins a new term "post-space" "where a chaotic sense of the spatial on all scales becomes a resource towards the revisioning of the postcolonial position in society and consequent issues of identity, the possibilities inherent in postcolonial space as a direct result of their hybrid histories."

The author, in five chapters, presents case studies of postcolonial novelists such as Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison and Wilson Harris for exploring their complex and varied relationships to colonialism and their experience of postcolonialism in different locations of this culture, in the imperial cities of the colonizers as also in the metropolitan cities of the colonized culture. Rushdie and Morrison embody the postcolonial reactions of Asian and African-American geographies whereas Harris represents the Carribean postcolonialists. American writers like John Cullen Gruesser and Timothy Powell also provide the postcolonial situations – for Powell 1776 being a postcolonial moment.

Upstone studies of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* as the rejection of an absolute colonial-influenced nationalism without rejecting India as a state. He does not imagine India as a nation to mean a cohesive and homogenous geographical space. Instead of any spatial homogeneity Rushdie pleads for a cultural unity dispelling all sorts of religious (Hindu/ Muslim) disparity that was created by the British colonizers in the garb of so-called nationalism. Rushdie avers any idea of purity in terms of divisionism or difference. Thus he scorns the spatial politics of the colonizers who identified space as the location of culture rather than create a space for homogenous social existence, a location where the inhabitants live with cultural ambiguities building up psychological and metaphysical defenses against cultural invasions. Division of India in terms of religion has failed precariously when one experiences difference between the Indian Muslims and Pakistani Muslims. The true foundation of an Indian nation would have been the tolerance of multiplicity, acceptance of culture as a phenomenon in the continuous process of dissemination where the notion of any "origin" or "originality" would have been only a false myth. But Rushdie's idealist view of "tolerance" appears itself a false myth when one goes back to the medieval India, to the severe Islamic intolerance of the Hindu and Buddhist "Kafers", the Islamic invaders aiming at Islamizing the whole world, by force. All our speculations and critiques about the misdeeds of the European colonizers appear meaningless, as only repetitions of the events of invasions of power – right from the Romans through the Turks and the Mongols. It has always

been the power, maybe physical or otherwise that has determined the fate of human beings all over the globe, the question of freedom or independence being always a false myth, may it be religious, economic or administrative. The present crises of the postcolonial countries are not only due to their colonization, but mostly to their inherent character, to their severe lapses in moral conduct. It does not matter whether India is a "state" or a "nation", whether Indian "nationalism" is a pre-colonial or post-colonial phenomenon. The very geographical space called India by the Europeans was indeterminate and flexible from time to time – from Brahmavarta to Aryavarta till the first attempt of the Maurya Chandragupta at constructing an integrated empire consolidating the city states. Thereafter Bharatavarsa is pictured as a space in between the Himalayas and Vindhyas. Puranas composed during the Guptas and their successors till the advent of Islam early in the 12th century named this area as Jambu Dwipa. Islamic rulers expanded this area which was expanded further by the European rulers. The precolonial Bharatavarsha is not indeed the colonial "India". Then what harm if this space is again subdivided as Hindustan and Pakistan? The Vedic religion was already hammered by the Buddha, and the post-Buddhist Brahmanic religion, struggling for its survival throughout the Islamic rule, could envisage its inevitable fall, as they were aware of the necessary rise and fall of all religious systems. The mythical aeon called Kaliyuga may historically be identified with the Islamic period culminating in the present day globalization that has destroyed the rigors of Brahmanism altogether.

The midnight-division of India based on religious difference is only natural, the British being instrumental. The present day Hindu-Muslim dichotomy is only a small bubble in the ocean of cultural hybridity. No space, no culture is original or permanently determined. It is only natural to say that future is uncertain. This division of space may further be divided, and the divisions might resist to be identified as either Indians or Pakistanis. The debates over the spatiality of culture, therefore, appear only topical and contextual, their texts being ever *overwritten*. Rushdie's treatment of Pakistan as an unnamed locale or the location of a fable is itself a fictional treatment of historical truth, quite interesting and enjoyable. Rushdie is a fiction-maker, neither a metaphysician nor a historian. Viewing from a metaphysical angle, all nations are imagined communities. The very concept of a nation being only a fiction, and their cultures being fictional. Upstone writes, "Rushdie's sense of *hopelessness* that the nation cannot be reformed, *cannot be in any sense other than the fictions* drawn away from a totalitarian path: that in terms of critiquing Pakistan the only entrance remaining in the backdoor of magic; that realism is impossible." (p. 49)

The author highlights the intertextuality of William Harris's *The Guyana Quartet* where the colonial journey encompasses both fiction and travel writing, the same intertextuality being continued in his *Heartland*. Colonial journeys typify the idea that every boundary line is a myth in the same way that the colonial adventurer declares empty space to aid and legitimize colonial expansion. "It is a common scenario that all the colonial adventures have been a quest for a space unknown hitherto, mysterious and therefore coveted for ownership: The journey in this sense is a microcosm of the

nation as it mimics the colony, an unstable construct fixed as natural and eternal even as it reveals the trace of its instability. The same is illustrated in *The Far Journey of Oudin* where "Oudin materializes in Ram's world in order to found a conception of empire", an anchor of imperial expansion. Starting from Shakespeare's "brave new world" the imperial journey of the British has repeated the adventures of the Roman emperors for colonizing the whole world discovering the ever-newness of the entire globe. A reading of these texts stimulates the reader's imagination for an endless journey to the wonderland, that is the world as such, forgetting the boundaries of the political consciousness altogether. One can enjoy a great sense of wonder in reading this travel stories ignoring its underlying political irony. One feels, so to say, there is no *spatial politics,* only man's quest for newness, may the leader be an Alice, or a Donne or Oudin. Why politicalize literary enjoyment? The Marxist intervention with an admixture of Foucauldian "Power" or Saidian anguish destroys the reader's aesthetic experience in the puzzle of Derridean dissemination or deconstruction. One feels, no such political motivation is necessary for understanding and enjoying a literary text or intertext. One might read *Midnight's Children* as a historical fiction or an intertext of fiction and history. Truth is not certainly determined by any political intention or intervention.

The author treats Toni Morrison as a counter instance to Harris's allegory of travel that suggests the colonial occupancy and mapping the space: "a pattern of abuse and trauma that results not simply in travelers whose identities reflect the colonial legacy of mapped and totalizing journeys, but also in journeys that still mean confronting colonialism directly." (p. 62) This the author illustrates in her study of *Beloved.* With Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* the journey metaphor "shifts to be related to the migrant experience, cast in a contemporary setting that initially seems very different from the kinds of travel and effects its implications. What may be seen as subtle motifs in Morrison and Harris – images of geometry and restriction – are for Rushdie the guiding images through which he translates the significance of the character's movements. (p. 64) By cross-examining these three novelists Upstone deconstructs the images of journey, adventure and travel into an intertext that illustrates the symbolism of colonial concepts of space, territory, boundary and mapping that lead to explain the origin of the myths of nation, nation-state and finally nationalism. The current slogans for multinationalism, multiculturalism and globalization end in garbing the very core of colonial politics. Upstone's detailed analysis of the seminal texts with reference to several subtexts manifests her ability and sincerity in intellectual exercises that she undertakes with an admirable sense of responsibility.

A.C. Sukla

Bishnu Charan Dash, *Mystic Eros Troubadours and the Vaisnava Poets of Medieval India,* New Delhi : Abhishek Prakashan, 2010 pp. 292.

Primarily designed as a cultural document on comparative medieval poetry, philosophy, religion and esoteric thoughts, the book *Mystic Eros* (Troubadours and the Vaisnava Poets of Medieval India) by Bishnu Charan Dash is a significant

contribution to medieval scholarship. It is also an invaluable contribution to comparative literature precisely because the main focus of this book is a comparative analysis of the concept of Eros and Kama, the god of love in Western and Indian traditions respectively. Eros as longing of the sickening soul in Neo-Platonism is metamorphosed into *Mystic-Eros* in the Middle Ages, and while ascending the various steps of the *chain of Eros*, the soul experiences a constant oscillation between the sacred and the profane. With the Troubadours of medieval France, Eros is viewed as a binding force that tends to bridge the gap between sense and spirit within the periphery of courtly love (*amour courtois*) – a powerful plea for refined sensuality. Passion, often treated by preachers and theologians as a notorious element, is viewed as a pure and purifying emotion by the Troubadours.

Dash tends to argue that like the Troubadours, the Buddhist-Tantric-Sahajiya Vaisnava poets metamorphosed *kama* into *prema* and devised an elaborate erotic-mystic ritual of *ragasadhana* (culture of love). Further, he has successfully juxtaposed the Troubadour technique of *donnoi*, deification of courtly lady (*domma*) and esoteric progression (*Eros-Amor-Jois*) with the Vaisnavite ladder of *kama-prema-mahasukha* after a deep comparative analysis of the lyrics of Trobadours and Vaisnava poets of medieval India.

The *Mystic Eros* is written with the remarkable felicity of language. Moreover, for easy understanding of the readers, the author has divided the book into five full-length chapters. The first chapter of the book traces the geneology of Eros in Greek mythology subsequently followed by its many-sided manifestation in classical philosophy, poetry and drama, medieval philosophy and religion ranging from the doctrines of St. Augustine, St. Boethius, Origen, Erigenna, Proclus, St. Bernard to the theory of Gnostics and Minne-mystics. The profane dimensions of *pagan Eros* combined with the platonic theory of ascent of Eros and the Neo-Platonic concept of Eros as mystical longing and sickening of soul for union with God, not only confronts the Christian concept of Agape, but also takes a reconciliatory turn in the Augustinian *Charitas* which is further assimilated into *Christianized Eros* ending finally in an identification of God, Eros and Agape. Obviously, God's identification with Eros prompted the medieval poets, mystics and singers of minne-piety to take an amorous view of the human longing for God which was further assimilated into the idea of worshipping 'woman' as Divine – an idea that gave birth to the cult of veneration of the beloved (*domna*) as the viaticum of spiritual union between the lover and God (Amor).

Chapter two is devoted to Kama, the Indian Eros that changes from its Vedic concept of 'creative energy' to amorous passion in erotics and classical Sanskrit literature, and from erotic-amorous longing for union, *kama* is metamorphosed into *prema-bhakti*; and the assimilation of *kama, prema* and *bhakti* tends to resolve the duality between sacred and profane thereby paving the path for non-dualistic unity which is the *summum bonum* of life in Indian tradition.

The third chapter under the title Courtly Love: Passion and the Poetry of Troubadours tends to analyze the origin and elaboration of the medieval concept of courtly love as developed by the Troubadours of the high Middle Ages. Passion which

was branded by the rationalists and Christian theologians as the most irrational and condemnable element in human nature carrying for the posterity the tragic burden of the *Original sin*, was glorified by the Troubadours as noble and ennobling experience that purifies as well as spiritually elevates the courtly lover. The Troubadours professed the doctrine of Eros, and at the same time expounded the aesthetics of pain. Denis de Rougement therefore aptly observes that in Troubadourian scheme of the ritual of romance, *passion* means *suffering*. Physical union being an anathema in courtly love, the Troubadour lover is thrown into the purgatory of passion in protracted separation from his *domna*. The fire of passion annihilates his baser desire; passion kills passion and in the process sensuality is metamorphosed into a refined emotion, a sublime and ecstatic experience. The courtly lover is transformed into an initiate, a practitioner of the mystic-erotic technique of *donnoi* that emphasizes observance of chastity and restraint (*mesura*) while serving the deified *domna* as the embodiment of divine wisdom and spiritual illumination.

While adulating adultery, the Provencal poets took a revolutionary and anti-christian stand on the ground that marriage presupposes carnal possession which is detrimental to the spiritual growth and elevation of the lover-initiate. It is not physical possession, but humility, courtesy, service, wholehearted surrender and sacrifice for the sake of beloved *domna* which the courtly lover can claim to be his proud and precious possession. The Troubadours like Guillaume IX of Aquitaine, Bernart de Ventadorn, Jaufre Rudel, Marcabru and Arnaut Daniel emphasized the culture of *cortezia* (courtesy), *jovens* (youth), *mesura* (restraint) and *jois* (joy) and established woman as a religion and the *domna* (beloved) as the sole source of goodness and the fountain source of all virtues and joys on the earth.

Chapter four under the title *Kama*, *Bhakti* and *Prapatti*: *Love Lyrics of the Vaisnava Poets of Medieval India* is designed as a confluence of *kama* (love), *bhakti* (devotion) and *prapatti* (whole-hearted surrender), and provides a detailed analysis of their combined continuation in the love lyrics of Jayadeva and Candidasa centering round the amorous relationship of Radha and Krsna. At the same time, a conceptual analysis of Sahaja has been offered to trace the influence of Tantric-Buddhist-Sahajiya erotic-esoteric practices in the Vaisnava lyrics. The concept of *sahaja* as such signifies spontaneous and easy realization of the self and the ultimate Reality through the path of natural exercise of passions and emotions. The *Sahajiyas* break away from the traditional unnatural yogic practice of bodily torture and repression of natural propensities and recommend the transformation of *kama* (profane) into *prema* (sacred) that culminates into a sublime feeling of bliss (*mahasukha*). The ultimate aim of the Tantric-Sahajiya-Vaisnavas is to seek the underlying oneness (*advaya*) of everything through the natural union of male and female symbolically suggested by the union of the divine pairs – of Siva and Sakti, Prajna and Upaya, Radha and Krsna. Human body being the microcosmic representative of the macrocosmic universe, every man and woman must realize, according to Tantric-Sahajiya thought that their spontaneous and pure love and union tends to the supreme state of non-duality and bliss.

Similarly, the Sahajiya Vaisnavas realize that human love in its noble and ennobling intensity can be treated as divine. They prescribe the theory of attribution (*aropa*), and

envisage behind the physical form (*rupa*) of every man and woman the real nature (*svarupa*) of the cosmic non-duality i.e. Siva and Sakti, Radha and Krsna. Thus, the sacred and profane, divine and human love are amicably reconciled in the Vaisnava lyrics of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Candidasa. While differing from the orthodox vaisnavite distinction between *kama* and *prema*, the Sahajiya Vaisnava poets argue that *kama* forms the very basis of *prema*; and they stick to the old homoeopathic principle that poison is destroyed by poison only. Once the poison is destroyed through the ritual of chastity and love (*ragassashana*), humanity becomes divinity; man becomes a superman.

Chapter five constitutes the core of the book in so far as it attempts to institute a comparative study of the Troubadour concept of courtly love and the technique of *donnoi* and the Tantric-Sahajiya erotic-esoteric theory of the cult of passion (*ragasadhana)* and the culture of *parakiya* as adumbrated in the lyrics of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Candidasa. Troubadour scholarship over the years has been profuse and right from C. S. Lewis (*The Allegory of Love, 1966*), Roger Boase (*The Origin and Meaning of Courtly Love*, 1977), A. J. Denomy (*The Heresy of Courtly Love,* 1947), Dennis de Rougement (*Passion and Society, 1951*), L. T. Topsfield (*Troubadours and Love*, 1978) to Simon Gaunt (*Troubadours and Irony, 1989),* Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (*The Troubadours: An Introduction, 1999*). Scholars have sufficiently highlighted the historical, rhetorical, thematic, philosophical and cultural perspectives of this celebrated literary tradition. But, none has presented systematically the significant Indic influence on the Troubadour erotic-esoterism. Dash has taken much pain in reading the original texts/authors and then assimilating them into the framework of his book in a heroic manner. However, D. Rougement, O. V. Garrison (*The Yoga of Sex, 1964)* and Ezra Pound *(Literary Essays, 1954 and The Spirit of Romance, 1952)* are the pathfinders who have pointed to some oriental connection, particularly of Tantricism, with the Troubadourian erotic-mysticism. He frankly states that the present work is prompted by Ezra Pound's observation about the Troubadour erotic-esoteric ritual in which the *domna* is mystified as a hymn (*mantram)*. Subsequently, Garrison's emphatic remark that "William of Poitiers, one of the first Troubadours, unequivocally spells out the Tantric nature of *donnoi*" (*The Yoga of Sex* p., 126), has remained a booster for him throughout the research work for finding out some viable connection between Troubadours and Tantric Sahajiya thought. The book testifies the author's vast reading and mature thinking, his wide range and depth, critical insight and comparative outlook, analytical bent of mind and logical rigour, and above all his assertive argument and critical style characteristic of a 'seasoned writer'.

Needless to say, the work under review would surely serve as a valuable source book for writers, readers, teachers, scholars and academicians who want to be fully acquainted with the Troubadours and the Vaisnava Poets of Medieval India.

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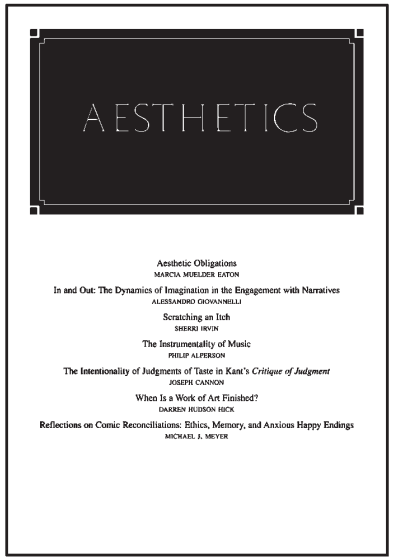
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